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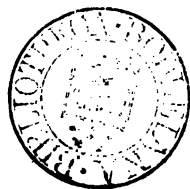
CHILDREN IN HEAVEN;

OR,

Comfort for Bereaved Parents.



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Salisbury & M^{rs} Fergus Lambart.

CHILDREN IN HEAVEN;
OR,
Comfort for Bereaved Parents.

BY THE
REV. EDWIN DAVIES,

AUTHOR OF
"The Hope of the Bereaved; or, Recognition in Heaven."

"Hark! heard ye not a sound
Sweeter than wild bird's note, or minstrel's lay?
I know that music well, for night and day
I hear it echoing round.
It is the tuneful chime
Of spirit voices!—'tis my infant band,
Calling the mourner from this darken'd land
To joy's unclouded clime.
My beautiful, my blest!
I see them there, by the Great Spirit's throne;
With winning words, and fond beseeching tone,
They woo me to my rest!"

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TO
THOMAS N. WHITE, ESQ.,
The Hall, Wotton, Surrey,
THIS EARNEST AND AFFECTIONATE ATTEMPT
TO CONSOLE
BEREAVED AND SORROWFUL PARENTS,
WHOSE
"PLEASANT PICTURES" HAVE BEEN OBLITERATED,
AND WHOSE
FAVOURITE LAMBS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AWAY,
BY
THE GREAT SPOILER,
IS, BY HIS KIND PERMISSION, MOST RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED,
WITH SENTIMENTS OF CHRISTIAN ESTEEM,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

It may, perhaps, be well to apprise the readers of this interesting and consolable manual, that it is intended to be a companion volume to "The Hope of the Bereaved; or, Recognition in Heaven," which was published a short time ago, the first edition of which was sold off in less than three months, and a second has recently been issued, thus affording a strong proof of the needful increase of books of such a class. In the work to which allusion has just been made, the Author attempted to relieve the anxious minds and comfort the sorrow-pierced hearts of those who lamented the loss of beloved Christian friends, with the confident hope of re-union and recognition where there is "no more death," and, consequently, no more separation and mourning. He sought, by holy words and Scriptural arguments, to excite their highest and strongest anticipations concerning the future happy estate of "the whole family in heaven." He now addresses himself specially to bereaved parents, whose choice Spring flowers have been gathered by the

"Reaper, whose name is Death,"

and whose once-blooming infants now moulder in the quiet dust of "God's Acre." Such—*especially mothers*, who feel far more intensely than fathers can—

need the catholic sympathy of every disciple of the Lord Jesus, and all the works that can be written to still and soothe their agonized hearts, and reconcile them to those sorrowful dispensations which, in the Providence of God, so often befall humanity. The world abounds with such mournful calamities. Many a weeping Rachel refuses to be comforted, because her children are not; and many a bereaved Jacob pathetically exclaims — "Joseph is not; and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away!"

The age in which we are privileged to live is the most prolific which has ever been known in book-making. Works on science, and philosophy, and theology, have issued from the press with amazing rapidity, and have been as eagerly devoured by the reading public: yet, strange to tell, the vast host of Christian mourners have been well nigh forgotten by Christian writers; and had it not been for the pitiful and timely remembrance of Him "who comforteth us in all our tribulations," they must have sunk under the crushing pressure of terrestrial sorrow. It is a notable fact, that until within the last few years, the poor widow was without a work specially devoted to alleviate her sorrowful condition; at least, if one was in existence previously, it had perished under oblivion's wave. At the kind and thoughtful suggestion of his dying partner, who had felt the acute sorrows and deep loneliness of the widowhood state before she became his wife, the Rev. John Angell James wrote a volume, entitled, "The Widow directed to the Widow's

God;" and a precious volume it is! It is also equally strange that, as the sad dispensations of which this little work treats are so rife in the families of men, no author has given his attention to the subject in all its bearings, and made a small and cheap book expressly for the benefit and consolation of bereaved parents. It is true that in many of the works coming under the head of the consolatory, the theme of the Author has been adverted to; but this is all, as far as he could learn. He has, therefore, sought to fill up a vacuum in religious literature which must have been often and severely felt by those whose homes have been desolated by the Great Destroyer. How far he has been successful, he leaves it with the Christian public to decide.

The Author has dwelt only on those great truths concerning which Christians of all denominations are unanimously agreed, and has studiously avoided introducing any and every disputed point in divinity. His design was not to stir up controversy on those things on which Christians agree to differ, but to write a book abounding with heavenly comfort, and which every true believer, of whatever sect or party, might, without the least prejudice, peruse. He has gladly passed by the arena of theological strife, and hastened to "the house of mourning" to "bind up the broken-hearted," and to maintain the character of a "son of consolation." He has written in simple and devout language, with a warm and sympathising heart, and often with a tearful eye: and though

he is aware he falls far short of what he ought to have written, as his motive was pure, he trusts that his "labour will not be in vain in the Lord."

Thanking the Christian public for the kind reception given to "The Hope of the Bereaved," the Author hopes his second effort will be none the less welcome to the homes and hearts of those who have waded through the deep and dark waters of bereaving trial. With unfeigned gratitude to the God of Love, he lays his little book on "the altar that sanctifieth the gift," and most fervently prays that His benediction, "which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it," may accompany it wherever it goes.

E. D.

OCTOBER, 1854.

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CHILDREN IN HEAVEN;
OR,
Comfort for Bereaved Parents.

CHAPTER I.
STRIKING CONTRASTS.

"I asked them why the verdant turf was riven
From its young rooting, and with silent lip
They pointed to a new-made chasm among
The marble-pillared mansions of the dead.
'Who goeth to his rest in yon damp couch?'
The tearless crowd reply,—'Only a babe.'
A BABE! And poise ye in the rigid scales
Of calculation, the fond bosom's wealth?—
Rating its priceless idols as ye weigh
Such merchandize as moth and rust corrupt,
Or the rude robber steals?"

LITTLE children are God's natural jewels. They are the most attractive objects in His wide creation. True, they are not universally acknowledged to be such; but it does not there-

fore follow that the fact is less real, and they are less interesting. Many there are who are charmed with literature, thrilled with music, fascinated with art, and struck with admiration by the wonderful adaptations and vastness of the material world, who regard little children as too common-place to be noticed with a loving attention, and too uninteresting to be made objects of reverential contemplation. They esteem, to some extent, the hoary-headed veteran, whose "fourscore years" weigh him down to the margin of the grave, but they can bend over the cradle of an infant without the least sensibility. If they speak of them, it is very slightly, except they be the offsprings of opulence and royalty, with whose being the history and welfare of a nation is associated; and, even then, the interest excited in them is but small. In many cases—that which seems to the eye of some to be great and grand, will attract more attention than those little creatures whose existence is linked with eternity, and comprised in the everlasting counsels of God. But though such interesting beings—as little children unquestionably are—may be slighted by some, they are interesting to others. The wild

flower of the lowly dell loses none of its beauty, because none but God and angels look upon it. It may "waste its sweetness on the desert air," but it is nevertheless pleasing to Him who moulded, and beautified, and scented it. And so, too, is infant being and young life. Little children are the most lovely flowers this side Eden: they bring with them into this hapless world the aroma and joy of that forfeited and blissful region. By their angel-like presence they purify human nature, and enrich it with those sympathies and sensibilities which make parents more virtuous and godlike. The heart's frozen affections are melted by the warmth of their innocent and sunny smile, and its dormant faculties awoke up to a new life by their early and strange prattle. They clothe it with those kindly attributes, and charitable excellencies, which are the best and brightest adornments of humanity. And what a cheerful and merry home they make! The horny-handed mechanic feels himself more than repaid for his sweating toil to procure for them "the bread that perisheth," when he returns at even-tide, and is greeted by their smiles and gladsomeness. And even the poor slave, who has laboured like

a horse for his inhuman master, and met with nothing but barbarous treatment and low curses all the day, forgives and forgets all when he reaches his humble cabin, and associates again with the dear objects of conjugal love. The unrestrained laughter which rings in the happy dwelling—the revel-rout of young voices which bounds over the homestead, is the sweetest music which can greet the human ear, or thrill the human heart. Well might Lord Byron, whose “genius” modern authors have branded as “demon,” yet who, in all his voluptuous career, never lost the feelings of a father, pronounce “the voices of children, and their early words,” the richest melody of a parent’s soul! They are God-sent boons whose mission is to chase away “dull care,”—little angels, who shake from off their golden wings the light and joy of Paradise! That home is not truly a home which is not gladdened and beautified with little children. The Rev. Thomas Binney says—“I think them the poetry of the world,—the fresh flowers of our hearths and homes;—little conjurors, with their ‘natural magic,’ evoking by their spells what delights and enriches all ranks, and equalizes the different

classes of society. Often as they bring with them anxieties and cares, and live to occasion sorrow and grief, we should get on very badly without them. Only think—if there was never anything anywhere to be seen, but great, grown-up men and women!—how we should long for the sight of a little child! Every infant comes into the world like a delegated prophet, the harbinger and herald of good tidings, whose office it is to ‘turn the hearts of the fathers to the children’, and to draw ‘the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.’”

Infidelity speaks of little children—as it does of every important and interesting subject—with a savage and lowering dogmatism, and styles them incarnate accidents—nature’s toys, whose existence, if they die in infancy, can answer no purpose in the economy of humanity, nor yet in any other economy, as, if they possess souls, they must necessarily be in an infantile, and, consequently, unfinished state, and must therefore perish with the body in the grave of mortality;—the drop from the great ocean of life returns to its native element, and there it mingles, and is lost. Now, granting, for a moment, that the theory of the

materialist is true, we demur to it as a sufficient and satisfactory reason why little children should be treated with cruel indifference. It is true they cannot act for themselves either physically or mentally, and, if left to themselves, must inevitably perish: but the simple and abstract fact that they possess *life*, invests them with an importance and a grandeur by the side of which worlds sink into insignificance! Life, in any form, or in any thing, is the sublimest mystery in creation! But we cannot receive *any* portion of the sceptic's shallow sophistry as true. We firmly believe, both from reason, and instinct, and Revelation, that an infant comes into the world the possessor of an immortal and infinitely-valuable soul—a vital principle, which, though in, is distinct from the body, and, unlike its infantile state, is a perfect and indestructible substance. But, supposing the soul of an infant is like its physical organism, as far as size and condition are concerned, does this prove that therefore it will perish together with the body? Nay! The sublime discoveries of chemical science prove that annihilation is no principle or law of the ascertained universe. This is demon-

strated and established beyond the shadow of a doubt. Not a single atom of created matter can be destroyed or lost. Its form and appearance may be changed, as well as its qualities, by combination ; but no human power, or conjunction of skill, can utterly destroy a single atom, or a drop of water, or an insect, or the tiniest of all the tiny things which the Creator has made. Why, then, if a particle of matter, or a drop of water, cannot be lost or annihilated, seek to quench that spark of ethereal fire which the Great Architect has lighted up in the fragile and beautiful tenement of a precious infant? Science refutes such a crude philosophy, and proves by irresistible demonstration, that, as whatever is—must be, the infantile body will never so perish that it will be an utter impossibility for the Lord of Life, who fashioned it, to raise it from the dead : and the Bible, in its inspired and infallible teachings, assures us, that as the soul contains no principle of dissolution, and is an uncompounded substance, it will live for ever, and—

* * * * "Flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

Death—come at what hour of the day of life it may—is not the annihilation, but the enfranchisement of the soul of an infant. The imperishable grain is safely deposited in the eternal garner. It has “shuffled off its mortal coil” to exist and act in the immaterial estate. It lives near God’s throne, awaiting the resurrection morn, always beholding the face of our Father in heaven, and revelling amid the undying splendours and rapt felicities of the beatific and eternal state!

Heathenism, for many centuries, has treated the infant race with barbaric cruelty, and immolated thousands of them on the legion altars of a man-made and savage religious system, as an attempted expiation for the sins of the soul. The loud and piercing cry of Gentilism—which has reverberated for ages—has been,—“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” Traditional autho-

city taught them that "without shedding of blood is no remission:" and being desirous to propitiate the "Great Spirit"—the fearful and horrid concomitant has been, that parents' hands have seized the consecrated dagger, and reddened in the warm blood of their young children, and the repulsive rites of idolatry have been richly baptized with human gore! Thus have they, in their ignorant infatuation, committed greater sin in the very attempt to atone for sin. Infinite love required not *such* sacrifices. Strange indeed must have been the religious notions of heathenism concerning the Divine Being to suppose that those inhuman offerings, of which it boasted, could be well-pleasing in His sight! But they imagined He would "meet them as a man." Lashed by the irresistible power of a guilty conscience which they sought in vain to pacify, fearing and recoiling from the future, and led on by a superstitious and blinded priesthood, many became, like Herod, wholesale infanticides; others left their darling children to perish on the margin of sacred rivers, or be devoured by the wild beasts prowling on their banks; and many others "made them to pass

through the fire." Such is an outline of the barbarous treatment of Gentilism to the infant race. Thank God! He has shown us "what is good." "Christ died for our sins." And all the sacrifice we have to make is that of "a broken and a contrite heart."

How vastly different the conduct exhibited by a Christian parent towards the little ones given him by God! Christianity never deteriorates, but deepens and sanctifies the natural affections of the parental heart. It makes good parents as well as good men. Such an one regards his children as parts of himself, as possessing an organism of immortality, and as having capacities which not all the treasures of earth and time can satisfy and fill. He is drawn towards them by "the bands of love," and cherishes an attachment for them which no absence can lessen, no distance destroy, no crime overthrow, and which even death itself cannot annihilate. Full well he knows that he is answerable for each of those redeemed and deathless beings "committed to his charge" until they are able "to discern both good and evil," and that each has a part to play in the great drama of life. He therefore strives

his utmost to train them up for the weal of humanity, the benefit of the world, the interests of eternity, and the glory of God. "When their intellect begins to develop itself," says the eloquent George Gilfillan, "he stands by, not merely watching the process with unutterable interest — and surely the sight of the evening star, breaking through clouds, is not so beautiful as the first shining out of an immortal soul in a child's dark or deep-blue eye — but seeking to remove every obstruction, and chase away every obscuring mist, before the dawning mind." No plumb-line therefore can fathom the deep and imperishable interest with which a Christian parent ever regards his legitimate and precious offsprings. How earnestly, too, he wrestles with "the Angel of the Covenant" for their early conversion to God! And when they have "passed from death unto life," and the peerless blessing of a converted heart and a new nature is obtained by faith in Christ, how rich and deep the tide of holy joy which overswells his more than satisfied heart! Never is man more like God than when he fully acts out the paternal character, and never does he approach so near the

Infinite! So beautiful, indeed, is a parent's affection for his little ones, that "the Father of mercies" has often employed it as a figure to shadow the eternal love and pitifulness of His own benignant heart towards his chosen and adopted heirs:—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."—PSALM CIII. 13. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."—ISAIAH XLIX. 15.

But the Divine Being is far more interested in little children than humanity—however amiable and affectionate—can possibly be. Jehovah is the God of Love. He is its fountain; and human love, at its best estate, is only a tiny streamlet flowing from the boundless ocean. The finite cannot feel as intensely and incomprehensibly as the Infinite. The love of God selects little children and makes them its protégées, and stretches over them its broad, warm wing. Nothing, indeed, which the Creator has fashioned is disregarded or treated with indifference by Him, from the lowest and meanest insect to the highest and mightiest angel; for

His tender mercies are over all His works. He hears the ravens when they cry, and He feeds the young lions when they roar; and even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice. Little children cannot, therefore, be forsaken and forgotten objects. It is a law of His providential kingdom, that they are to be regarded with a distinguished care, and angels have charge concerning them. When they have been ill-treated, and none have come forth to vindicate their rights, and revenge their wrongs, God has done it himself. Whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of His eye. The house of Israel was visited with divine punishment, because they had filled the streets of their metropolis "with the blood of the innocents." And what a terrible fate overtook the sanguinary Roman butcher, who slew so many young children at the birth of "the young child" who was the destined Redeemer of mankind! Their blood cried for vengeance from the stained earth; and the many-voiced wailings of the bereaved mothers of Bethlehem joined in thrilling and mournful concert, imploring retribution from Heaven. And retribution, signal and fearful, came at last! Now,

we naturally conclude, that if God is so mindful of the temporal condition of little children, He cannot be less concerned respecting their spiritual and eternal interests. But we are not left to simple conjecture, or natural inference, on this momentous point. He has graciously included them in His "everlasting covenant," and made over to them very many "exceeding precious promises;" and has also legislated for them as well as for man; and given them patterns of youthful moral excellence in Scripture chronicle for their early imitation. For this specific purpose, the characters of the illustrious and virtuous Hebrew slave of Potiphar, and the juvenile prophet Samuel, whose startling enunciations made both the body and soul of the doting and venerable Eli to tremble like an aspen leaf—are delineated by God. And so also are the characters of the young King Josiah, who copied not the hellward example of his royal predecessors, but walked in God's ways; and the child Timothy, who, from early infancy, was well versed in the theological lore of Scripture. And last, but not least, the beautiful and transparent character of the "holy child Jesus," who "increased in wis-

dom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Divinity lived, and smiled, and slept in the bosom of an infant, and sanctified the earliest periods of the humanity of the Son of God, which became subject to his parents, that in childhood and youth, as well as in advanced manhood, he might be our human Archetype, and leave "an example that we should follow in His steps." Little children, then, have a large share in the pitiful love of God,—their present weal and future destiny are bound up in His everlasting purposes of mercy and salvation.

And when the Saviour of the world "went about doing good," fulfilling His great and gracious mission, and transacting His "Father's business," He was not so absorbed in His noble work as to forget little children. He did not pass them by as not yet possessed of the solemn prerogatives of man, the awful trust of moral responsibility; nor did He think it beneath His matchless dignity to stoop and notice them; but He took them from the warm bosom of maternal love, pressed them to His far warmer heart, put His hands on them, and breathed a benison over them, which contained

their glorious charter of everlasting bliss ! It is true we do not read of the Saviour taking so much outward interest in infant beings as “grown-up men and women,” inasmuch as His mission, as the Great Teacher, was chiefly to those who were responsible agents, and who could understand what He taught, and why He came down to our earth. His beaming eye, nevertheless, was on them : His miracle-working power was often exerted to relieve them from temporal and physical maladies : and doubly welcome to His heart, after the rude rejection and vile treatment of the elders of the Hebrew people, was the waving of palm-branches, and the music of their hosannacry, which shook the Mount of Olivet, and reverberated in the arches of the metropolitan temple of Judea !

If, then, the frozen-hearted philosopher—who talks so loudly about infancy being too despicable for the contemplation of thinking man—treats the young race, on whom hangs the future destiny of the world, with scornful contempt ; and if Gentilism, in her savage and superstitious madness, immolates them on her legion altars, the Christian parent regards them

as "an heritage of the Lord;" and feels that they are related to the deepest and purest affections of his heart; God loves them "with an everlasting love," and has environed them by His providence, addressed them in the Bible, and given them into angel charge; and the World's Redeemer has taken them up in His arms, clasped them to His swelling bosom, bound a wreath of ever-living glory round their young brows, and blessed them; and, what is infinitely beyond all, has died on Calvary's cross to redeem them from perishing!

CHAPTER II.

GATHERED SPRING FLOWERS.

“There is a Reaper whose name is Death,
And, with his sickle keen,
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

‘Shall I have nought that is fair?’ saith he;
‘Have nought but the bearded grain?’
Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to me,
I will give them all back again.’

He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,
He kissed their drooping leaves;
It was for the Lord of Paradise
He bound them in his sheaves.”

DEATH is in the world: this is as clear as the sun in the sky. It is also equally clear that all, without a single exception, are his intendedly-fated victims, and that it will be an utter impossibility to elude his piercing eye, or avoid the fatal shaft sent from his bow. Sombre, indeed, is the reflection, that whatever be the circumstance of each — whether kings occupying thrones, or beggars sit-

ting on dunghills — whether rich or poor, revered or despised — we are converging towards one destined point—

“ And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.”

But what seems to add a far deeper melancholy to such a solemn reflection is, that the infant just born into the world, and awoke to life to behold the sunshine of a mother's smile, to listen to a mother's lullaby, and to feel the warm and strong beatings of a mother's heart, should perish prematurely. We can understand, to some extent, why advanced humanity should die. Constituted as it now is, its ever-going machinery naturally wears itself out, and cannot work beyond a given period. It is then for a while dispensed with, whilst the intelligent and deathless spirit soars to immortal regions. It has, as the late Dr. Chalmers beautifully styled it, the Sabbath morning and afternoon of life; the evening shadows then fall, and the night of death sets in upon it. But it seems a strange mystery why nature's fairest spring flowers should be so early blasted by the cold

breath of the Destroyer. "Reason here is all perplexity; philosophy is nonplussed; and science dumb-founded." Death itself is an enigma, which becomes more profound in the exit of little children.

It is an essential point to consider first why death is in the world at all; for such a consideration will doubtless elucidate a great portion of the mystery associated with the death of infants, and facilitate our endeavour to arrive at just and scriptural views of this sad theme.

Various theories have obtained amongst different classes of thinkers concerning death. Some have spoken of it as a part of that necessary discipline which the Governor of the World exerciseth over the entire human family, the benefits of which are to be seen only at the resurrection. Others have represented it as "the debt of nature," which, when paid, mankind are free from all future evil. The naturalist states our mortality—as he does our sorrows—to be the absolute and unerring result of nature's fixed laws, which are like the unalterable decrees of the Medes and Persians. He avers that it is man's destiny to die—that he was constituted expressly to die. Jeremy

Taylor propounds a theory in some respects not unlike this, and maintains that "that death which God threatened to Adam, and which passed upon his posterity, is not the going out of this world, but the manner of going." This is the least objectionable theory of the three named. But we think the Bible teaches a far different philosophy of death: and though its doctrine brings human pride down to the dust, we prefer it a thousand-fold to the theories fabricated by erring man. In his peculiarly-nervous style, St. Paul—the prince of apostolic writers—unfolds the whole subject in a few inspired words:—"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—Rom. v. 12. In the Bible, then, death is declared expressly to be the "wages of sin." This puts an end to all controversy on this sombre question. It is temporal punishment on the guilty violaters of God's righteous law. Divine vengeance has smitten humanity with a fatal plague, which is constantly sweeping off the earth—to the darkness, and silence, and corruption of the tomb—the beauty, the intelligence, and the life of myriads. It has

changed this bright world into a vast "Golgotha," and filled it with moaning death-beds, broken families, and desolate hearts ! And yet, terrible as all this is, it is but a faint representation of God's displeasure against sin. The temporal death of the body is not, as some have asserted, the capital result flowing from the primal transgression. There is "the second death," which is the ulterior and awful sequel of sin : from which may the God of Mercy deliver both the writer and reader ! Eden, beautiful and blissful as it was, was not, we think, designed by God to be the permanent home of man, had he staid in innocence. His eternal dwelling-place was in the skies. He was to ascend a step far higher in station, and participate in larger and deeper joys than even Paradise could afford. But how he was to reach this celestial consummation, is a question not easy to decide. Jeremy Taylor, and others of the same school, say through death ; but a death without any pain, or humiliation, or fear, attending it. No cold dew would have gathered on the pale brow, no deep groan escaped from the suffering frame, no dark shadow fallen on the dying pillow ; but life, as

the eloquent Robert Pollok has it, would have—

“Set, as sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven !”

Others say that man would have been translated, like Enoch and Elijah, without seeing death, or passing through the dark portals of the grave : they look upon those supernatural removals as types of what would have universally been, if man had not fallen and forfeited Eden. Now, whatever *might* have been the vehicle of man's removal in changing worlds, had he not sinned, we cannot determine ; but of this we have an absolute certitude—that the way to heaven *now* lies through excruciating suffering, and the deep, damp grave of corruption. But if it is true that death is an infliction of divine punishment for the primal sin of the first human pair, why should little children who have not “sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,” die in infancy ? for it is a palpable fact, which our grave-yards and family chronicles will sorrowfully corroborate, that infants—flowers

just budded—die as well as the venerable patriarch on whose head the snows of “three-score years and ten” rest. There are no bereavements which occur so often; and there are few parents who have not wept over little graves, and who have not “little ones” in heaven. The tiny graves of our “Machpelah” far outnumber the larger turfed hillocks heaped on the bosom of the sleeping dead. There are mysteries connected with this solemn and heart-rending truth, so profound that they cannot now be cleared away. By and by, the dark glass will be broken, and an ocean of everlasting light will flood all those deep mysteries which we cannot at present grasp and comprehend, and in the light of the throne we shall see light. Meanwhile, we may rest confident that the Governor of the World neither permits, or does, anything without a competent and great reason: and could we behold all things as He does, we should find that which now appears so profoundly inexplicable, clear as the sun; and where we are now perplexed, we should then adoringly wonder at the graciousness of the sovereign decree which transplants so many of our young, and

fragile, and beautiful flowers to an infinitely more genial and thriving clime. The sin of our natural and fallen sire introduced the inexorable and vengeful law of death, and to this general law humanity, in all its phases, is subject, from the infant of a span long, to him whose grandevity exceeds the average life of mankind. Though guiltless of personal transgression, little children sinned in Adam as their public head, and therefore in Adam they die. We have met with a beautiful epitaph, composed by a Christian minister, and placed on a tombstone, beneath which slept the ashes of four beloved children, and which throws such a charm around little graves by the heart-soothing and scriptural sentiments put forth, whilst it illustrates the point we are discussing, that we cannot refrain from introducing it:—

“ Bold infidelity, turn pale and die,
Beneath this stone four infants' ashes lie ;
Say, are they lost or saved ?
If death's by sin, they sinn'd ; for they lie here :
If heaven's by works, in heav'n they can't appear.
Reason, ah ! how deprav'd !
Revere the Bible's sacred page : the knot's untied :
They died, for Adam sinn'd ; they live, for Jesus
died.”

Thus may we "sing of mercy" in the "midst of judgment," for the mysteriously-early exit of little children affords us matter of holy and devout thanksgiving. "Had there been no remedy provided," says Dr. Candlish, "we must believe that the whole progeny of Adam, whom, in his probation, he represented, must still have been brought into being; and there might seem reason also to conclude, on that supposition, that all would have been suffered, one after another, each individual for himself, to show what was in them; so that none would have been taken away in infancy, or before opportunity had been given them to manifest, by their own wicked works, their practical concurrence in the rebellion of their first father; and so to prove the reality and universality of the imputed guilt and transmitted taint of his original apostacy. If so, then the fact that any little children die, and still more, that so many die, taken along with what is revealed respecting their interest in the life-giving remedy of the Gospel, as well as in the deadly disease of sin (ROMANS v. 14, 15), must be viewed as one of the blessed fruits of Christ's interposition. * * * It is part

of His purchase to have so many given to Him to be regenerated and sanctified from the womb, and to be taken away from the evil to come."

Early death has been regarded as a calamity of no ordinary magnitude, and is sometimes represented in the Bible as having taken place as a divine retribution on its guilty parents, as in the sad case of David and Bathsheba. It is impossible, under such circumstances, to conceive of a more affecting proof of the heinousness and turpitude of sin, than the infliction of death on an infant not personally culpable of the deed which has smitten it into the tomb! No wonder that the guilty sire fell to the earth, and wept when he saw divine retribution, in the sufferings and death of his offspring, levying its righteous exaction for his sin! It is surely mournful enough for a parent to see his child die, independent of its being the special object of the ire of divine justice; but it is most appalling and overwhelming in the instance of the Monarch of Israel. Its death is then vicarious; it is the temporal saviour of its guilty parents. And yet, even in such an unhappy case, and indeed in every other which might

* * * "Then weep not; but alike
Adore a 'taking' and a 'giving' God.
Deem not these blossoms prematurely pluck'd.
Let those who make this fleeting world their all,
And its horizon bound their happiness,
Talk of *untimely graves!* No flower can drop
Too soon, if ripe for glory. Early pluck'd—
Is early bliss. If the great clock of Time
Has, in life's dawn of morning, toll'd its knell,
And number'd earthly hours, it hastens heaven.
An early death-bed is an early crown!"

It is eminently worthy of remark, that a dying child has no fear of death, just because it can know nothing, either theoretically or practically, of sin. It is true it brings with it into the world a corrupt nature, being shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; but not having the unrestricted use of its instinctive and rational powers, and not having become a moral and responsible agent, it is therefore mentally and morally unconscious of inherent evil, and, when it dies, and crosses the threshold of the eternal world, is happily saved from both natural and moral fear. How different the dying experience of the sinner who is "driven away in his wickedness!" One cannot but discover in this a redeeming feature in the premature death of infants. There is

also a wide difference between their death and that of Christian believers. Generally speaking, the "mortal paleness" on the cheek of the dying Christian is embellished with a glory which bursts from the exulting soul, and which floods the valley of death with a light and beauty which Death may not scatter or mar. The chinks and breaks, made by affliction in the falling tabernacle, let in the light of heaven. He obtains through them brighter and happier glimpses of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Close on the margin of the river of Jordan, he sees the everlasting hills of his everlasting home: he hears its ravishing harmonies; and the sweet and refreshing fragrance of its never-withering flowers is wafted across its deep waters. He trembles not at death, nor shrinks from the grave; but, as he hears the footfall of the one, and is approaching the darkness and corruption of the other, he sees his crown, his throne, his inheritance awaiting him; and then the sweating brow is pillowed on the bosom of the "exceeding precious promises" of God, and the strong arms of Omnipotent Love are thrown around him. With what trium-

phant exclamations does he enter the deep bed of the river ! “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”—2 TIMOTHY IV. 7, 8. “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—1 COR. XV. 55, 57. Conquered, yet he conquers ; and, when he falls, victory is emblazoned on his “ shield of faith.” Then “ the battle of life ” is hushed ; the work of earth is done ; the probation closed ; and death to the Christian is—

* * * * “ Like a shadow thrown,
Softly and lightly, from a passing cloud,”

as he enters into the rest which remaineth for the people of God ! But in the instance of a dying infant, we hear no rapturous exclamation—no bursting of immortal joy—no defiant and holy triumph over death and the

grave. All its utterances are those of dying agony, rising spontaneously from the fainting heart of the little sufferer: or else it dies in fettered and mournful silence. As far as we can learn it has no dread for the "unknown future"—no hope for the "land of deepest shade." Luther says that little children "die without fear or anguish, without disputes, and without the temptations which usually beset death:" so he judged from being an eye-witness of the exit of his dear child Madeleine. Parental and Christian sympathy cannot therefore encourage and strengthen them in nature's grand and solemn conflict. Yet, if Heaven has a peculiar regard for young life and infant being—if they are the protégés of His love, and if He upholds and strengthens the fainting spirit of the adult Christian in dying, surely He does not forget those little ones in death, who *then* have far greater need of His almighty help than in life, and whose angels do always behold His face in glory! It would indeed be strangely unlike Him whose nature is all love and sympathy, and who "gathers the lambs in his bosom," to leave helpless infancy alone in the pitchy darkness of its last

earthly hour, to battle single-handed with the grisly foe, and to struggle by itself with the rough and dashing surges of the cold river of death! It would be the veriest difficulty for us to believe the fearful contrary.

“ Yes! o’er the couch an angel spread
His pure ethereal wings,
Imparting to the infant soul
Unutterable things :

And whisper’d soft of anguish spar’d
Of bliss immortal given !
And all the new-born senses fill’d
With dreams of opening heaven !”

Poor mother! the scalding tears of maternal sympathy gush forth as thou seest thy little babe’s exquisite sufferings,—those foreshadowings of death—and canst not alleviate them! Its piercing cry of agony drives thee to distraction! Fain wouldest thou suffer in its stead! But it must die in thy lap! And yet, though thou perceivest them not, there are other arms—and they are far mightier than thine—around that dying child. “The Good Shepherd” has carried the lamb to the heavenly pasture, and encircled its fair brow with a halo of everlasting glory! That cold and dead piece of clay

lying on thy soft lap, or in the little cradle, is but the perishable cabinet, the precious jewel now sparkles in the diadem of Jesus! Thy piercing cry cannot awake it from its deep and mortal slumber!

In the infancy of the world there was no death. No law had been violated, no guilt contracted. The "old serpent" had not trailed over the fair flowers of Eden, nor passed over its lovely bosom, nor left his slime-mark on its bright pathways. The sky was cloudless and serene; the sun was ever clear; nature was without a seared leaf; man's heart without a care or a sorrow; and everything was brimful of jubilant gladness! But alas! man sinned; guilt was contracted; Paradise marred; the ground cursed; and humanity smitten with disease and death! But, blessed be God! Jesus Christ has "magnified the law;" He has made an atonement for sin. He has captured death, and robbed him of his sting, and despoiled the grave of its victory. His blood "cleanseth from all sin." Now, as earth began with Eden, but was marred by the first Adam's sin, it will end with Eden, because of the second Adam's death. "Para-

dise Lost," will yet be "Paradise Regained." And as there was a happy period when there was no temporal death, there will ultimately be a repetition of this delightful state, with this mighty and glorious difference—DEATH WILL HIMSELF DIE, and God and angels will bury him in a grave from whence he will obtain no resurrection! An immortal life will then pulsate in every heart, and a relaxless energy strengthen every nerve. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." —REV. XXI. 4.

CHAPTER III.

LIGHT IN THE DARK.

“Why do the loveliest of earth
The soonest pass away,—
Like radiant flowers of summer birth,
The earliest to decay?

They come, like angel forms, to bless
Our visions for a while;
They make our daily burden less,
And half our tears beguile.

They grow so deeply in our hearts,
We make them idols there;
Till God, in love, asunder parts,
The ties which bind them here.”

“THE Christian religion,” exclaims the proud sceptic, “is full of mysteries.” We grant this: but we affirm that its very mysteries are amongst its chiefest glories. A religious system without them would most palpably develope its human origin; but one which includes so many things which are infinitely above and beyond man, at once asserts its divinity, and

proclaims its author God. That, therefore, which the enemy of the Bible urges as an objection to a personal and hearty embracement of Christianity, we consider as one of the confirmations of its unearthly origin, and one of the principles of its inherent grandeur.

But mysteries are not confined to religion. There are many in nature which no science can solve, and no philosophy explain. Man, too, is an incomprehensible mystery to himself. And there are mysteries also in the government of the world, which are patent to him who watches the change and current of passing events.

If, say some, there is an all-wise and omnipotent President of the World, why is the "cruel sunshine thrown by fortune on a fool," whilst the virtuous are oft left to positive indigence? Why is seraphic loveliness and exquisite suffering so frequently companioned together, whilst the wicked "are not in trouble as other men?" Why, too, are great, bad men permitted to live to a robust and hearty old age, whilst the world's brightest lights and best benefactors die prematurely? And why have we the startling phenomenon of the death of

infants, whose brief history is but an epitome of humanity—a short dream of life? We cannot tell. God, and God alone, knows, and “He giveth none account of His matters.” Man has often attempted to reconcile these—to us irreconcilable things—with the existence and government of the Divine Being, but has generally left the enigma where he found it, or, rather, made mystery more mysterious by his erroneous conclusions. And yet, although our great ignorance prevents our giving anything like a full and correct explanation of the divine procedure, we may ever rest assured that the same glorious Being who speaks as a God in the Book of Life, will act as a God in the superintendence and economy of the world. We see only one side—and that but dimly—of life’s great scene, and we judge of God’s designs by half-finished experiments. Could we see the other and bright side, and judge from the commanding position of the eternal world, we should then behold light chasing away darkness—orderspringing out of chaos—everlasting felicity resulting from terrestrial sorrow; and, doubtless, should exclaim, in the majestic language of inspiration—“The Lord reigneth; let

the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."—PSALM xcvi. 1, 2.

* * * * "I'm apt to think the man
That could surround the sum of things, and spy
The heart of God, and secrets of His empire,
Would speak but love: with him the bright result
Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
And make one thing of all theology."

It is a note-worthy fact, that the most eminent mysteries recorded in the Bible, have been blended with the experience, and associated with the history of the most eminent saints. Such were regarded as unmistakable and distinguished proofs of divine regard: "for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,"—HEB. xii. 6—by extraordinary, as well as ordinary afflictive dispensations. It was a very mysterious exaction made by God upon "the Father of the Faithful," when he commanded him to immolate the bright and hopeful scion of his house—the son of promise. But inexplicable and great as the sacrifice was, Abraham yielded

a ready and sanctified obedience to the stern request; he bowed submissively to the strange ordination of Heaven, and his Christian conduct is memorialized by the Holy Spirit on the imperishable tablet of divine truth, as an example worthy of the notice and imitation of Christian parents to the latest ages. This mysterious part of Abraham's history is its sublimest feature. Now, when God issues the imperative command for the immediate surrender of those bright ornaments of our homes, which He kindly lent us only for a season, He has reasons for so doing of the highest importance—reasons which concern His own glory, and the eternal safety and happiness of the tried disciple. He never permits the poisonous shafts of death to fly at random. And if the bereaved believer will but listen to “the still small voice” succeeding the driving storm, or to the monitions of the prophet in his inner nature, much of the mystery of the premature death of infants will be cleared away, and he will learn that they die for his personal and everlasting benefit; nay, more, that they die for the benefit of the world.

We will now specify a few of the probable

reasons of the early death of young children, as far as Christian parents themselves are concerned, and we leave it with their consciences to decide which has direct application to themselves, and reveals their sad error.

Many fond parents, looking at the multiplied attractions and endearments of their offspring, have said, "this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands."—GEN. v. 29. The celebrated George Whitfield had a son who, as he imagined, was born to be a star of no common glory; but the son soon died, and the hopeful father saw his great mistake. There is a tendency in the human heart to convert natural blessings into natural idols—to worship the creature instead of the Creator. The heart is naturally idolatrous, and readily worships the beautiful, especially when it finds it in the lovely objects of conjugal love. The time was, when God was its "all and in all"—its "Alpha and Omega;" when celestial fire burnt brightly and constantly on its holy altar; and when its chief affections were alone centered on Him: but that felicitous period was as transient as it was glorious. We now "worship the creature," and forget Him who

should attract, and concentrate, and absorb in Himself the primal love of the universal heart of humanity. God seeks nothing more, and He will be satisfied with nothing less than our supreme admiration and affection. He has made it a law of our nature to love our children and friends: and He has commanded us, in the Scriptures, to love one another even as Christ has loved us. But He alone must occupy the heart's highest throne, and all beside must be content to sit on its footstool. It is not, therefore, because we love "the creature" that God is displeased with us, but because we permit the displacement of the Sovereign of the heart, and readily burn "sweet incense" before a human shrine. Idolized humanity "sits as God in the temple of God." Now, children are rival competitors with the Divine Being for the heart's supremacy. Like the ivy which clings and grows round the giant oak until it has covered every branch, thereby preventing their growth, so they entwine and clasp round the human affections, too frequently turning them out of their proper channel, and absorbing all their streams in themselves. They stunt the growth in piety,

estrangle the soul from God, and pave the way for spiritual apostasy. Divine and severe discipline, under these circumstances, is absolutely indispensable, to restrain the wandering affections, to correct the perilous mistake, and lead the soul back to Him who had been forsaken and forgotten. And God smote the tender vine in its vernal loveliness; he blighted the young gourd under which we had sought repose; He hushed the richly-musical and sweet voices of those little incarnate angels whose presence made our now desolate homes so bright and happy. In such a mournful dispensation which righted him, many a bereaved Christian parent has seen—not what the unsanctified murmurer fancied he beheld, a disposition on God's part to tantalize human kind, by bestowing natural boons, and then recalling them just when they were most loved and prized, nor yet a desire to break up our earthly happiness, for God, unquestionably, is greatly concerned that all should be happy—but he has seen and felt that the heart had idolized the little ones gathered round the home-hearth, and Jehovah had been outvied and eclipsed:—gods had been made of human comforts: the

spring flowers of earth had been preferred to Him who is "the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." How needful, therefore, for doting parents to attend to the judicious counsel of an old friend,—“Beware of little idols in white frocks!” No creature can be a satisfactory substitute for God; but He can be far more than a satisfactory substitute for every creature. The light of a glow-worm is not so brilliant as the light of a star, and the feeble lamp cannot supply the absence of the glorious sun! How blessed the experience of those who can chime with the beautiful language of the eminently-pious Mrs. Rowe—

“Thou dost but take the lamp away
To bless me with unclouded day!”

Referring to the eclipse of a bright star which shone in his foreign home, the death of a lovely and only son, the Rev. Dr. Judson, the famed missionary to India, pathetically writes:—
“Our only darling boy was, three days ago, laid in the silent grave. Eight months we enjoyed the precious little gift, in which time he had so completely entwined himself around his parents’ hearts, that his existence seemed

necessary to their own. But God has taught us by afflictions what we would not learn by mercies—that our hearts are His exclusive property, and whatever rival intrudes, he will tear it away.” Alas! that fond parents will only learn the lesson of human idolatry, when the little idol is struck down to the grave by a justly jealous God, and it moulders in the quiet dust of the grave-yard! Doubtless, many a child would have lived to be a man, had it not been for the sinful homage of its doting parents! But their loss is its infinite gain, and the severe dispensation which removed it was a benison to both.

And, then, how prone we are to forget our own mortality! It is a lamentable truth that, although we often hear the most eloquent and pathetic sermons from the pulpit on the fragility and brevity of life, and as often peruse the productions of gifted authors on this truly sombre subject, and although our bookshelves are crowded with biographical notices of the departed, we forget, most readily and willingly, that “we must all needs die,” and be gathered to our fathers. We think all mortal but ourselves. The carnality of the heart,

the every-day concerns of earth, and the instinctiveness of life, are exceedingly prejudicial to the repeated and calm meditation of the absolute mutation awaiting the physical economy. The Fountain of Wisdom has endeavoured to instruct us on this point, by drawing illustrations of it from the green grass of the field, and the lovely flowers of nature; but the most impressive, and moving, and permanent lessons are learnt from the little coffins and the little graves of little children. The Great Teacher has frequently to supplement his lessons of wisdom by bereaving chastisements. Harder than adamant must that heart be which did not feel softened and melted by such a solemn spectacle; and dim, indeed, must be the eye of faith of that Christian parent who did not perceive, in such a mournful dispensation, the design of the world's Great Arbiter! The death of an infant preaches a far more solemn and impressive sermon than the most gifted divine. The ready-flowing tear, in after years, proves that it has lost none of its potency; and "by it he being dead yet speaketh." We learn to "die daily" by premature mortality. And thus the living race reap at least one incalcu-

lable advantage from the early death of young life—the sudden quenching of the lights of our households—the speedy exodus of our treasures to enrich the kingdom of glory.

How frequently, too, inordinate attachment to the world necessitates divine chastisement! The love of the world, though strictly and repeatedly prohibited by God in the Sacred Oracles, is, alas! the prevailing sin of too many professing Christians. We are more disposed to make earth our Paradise than to copy the holy example of the good patriarch Abraham, who “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” The heart is naturally attracted, and charmed, and carried away with “the things which are seen.” A splendid mansion, decorated with all that artistic skill can devise, and mechanical ingenuity execute, with all the necessary and correspondent appendages; well-laid-out lawns and gardens; an expensive and carefully-selected library of rare authors; a choice circle of attached friends; a large fortune; and a prosperous and loving family—are among the chief of those temporal things which confine the vision of the soul to an earthly

horizon, and allure it from its God. But there are cases when all this affluence does not roll round the Christian, and, like the tide of the sea, bear him away in its recession into an ungodly world; less wealth and less pageantry has alienated the heart from "the central point of bliss." O, it does not require the riches of the golden millionaire—Baron Rothschild—to tempt the believer to become worldly-minded! A comfortable, temporal position is oftentimes more than enough to compass such a result. The well-prepared tinder is previously stored in the chambers of the heart, and it sometimes needs only the spark of temptation to set all in a blaze. The germ of evil is, by nature, embedded in the soul, and it needs only the sunny rays, and the gentle showers of prosperity, to cause it to put forth and blossom. And it will blossom, if a divine power does not check its growth by counteracting influences. The soul will naturally rise, with outward circumstances, in pride and self-sufficiency, if the grace of God does not keep it down in the dust of humiliation. "Some years ago," said the late Rev. William Jay, "when preaching in Bristol Tabernacle, among

other notes I received to pray for individuals, one was this:—‘A person earnestly desires the prayers of this congregation, who is prospering in trade’—ah! said I to myself, here is a man who knows something of his own heart; here is a man that has read the Sriptures to some purpose.” There is surely more grace needed when those circumstances are increasing which are eminently calculated to tempt and injure the soul. Thriving Christians do not always apprehend their danger; and, therefore, do not seek that heavenly aid which alone would prevent their being carried down the strong current of temporal prosperity to a state of positive apostacy. How strikingly emphatic are the words of the Great Teacher on this point!—“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”—**MATT. XIX, 24.** Mild discipline will not awaken worldly-minded Christians to a perception of their spiritual condition. The long, stormy night of adversity must set it upon them. God must throw a pall of gloom over their sunny prosperity. He must draw the curtain of sorrow around their erring souls, and snap the golden chain which

binds and rivets them to the snare of the fowler. Like Joab, who sent messenger after messenger from the battle-field to his anxious royal master, each the bearer of more fearful tidings than his predecessor, so He who knows the heart's idol, and is best acquainted with the peril lying in the believer's pathway to heaven, sends one trial after another—one sorrow after another, the last, perhaps, as in the case of King David, being the death of an only son. It is then a "day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains." Then, when the first golden link in the family chain is broken, the fairest flower plucked, and Benjamin taken away, Christian parents feel how little there is on earth to love, and how little worthy it is of the high regard they have paid it, to the imperilment of their everlasting interests. The vacant cot, the silent nursery, and childhoods toys, with tacit and moving eloquence make their own pathetic appeals to the bereaved parental heart, and proclaim, more touchingly than the most pensive music of the poet's lyre, and more powerfully than the most earnest argument of "the

preacher," how vain earth is, and how empty are its brightest joys. They awake up from their dreamy state, like the repentant Solomon, to find "the world grown hollow," and "vanity" stamped broad and deep on all their fancied pleasures. True and lasting happiness is not to be found in an idolized world, but in a crucified world. If we strike the roots of an inordinate attachment into this fading and changeable condition, the hand of a merciful and chastening God will be felt, loosening the tendrils of the alienated heart, which are found clasped round a forbidden object, and binding its strong affections around Himself.

Then the last, but not the least, design in the economy of divine dispensation is—to ripen and fit the soul for heaven—to allure and fix the heart where its everlasting treasures are. And what more likely and better plan can Omnipotent Love and Infinite Wisdom adopt, as an instrumental means, to secure such a sanctified and glorious result, than the death of our dear children? Each infant taken to heaven exerts a powerful influence in weaning Christian parents from the carnal and the perishable, and is as a strong

cord to bind their hearts to "the things which are not seen." The spirits of departed children are gone to heaven to woo us thither. Parts of ourselves have crossed Jordan, and now dwell in the "land flowing with milk and honey"—the region of "everlasting spring" and "never-withering flowers." They have literally taken possession of the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."—1 PETER I, 4, 5. They are forerunners into glory—forepledges that we shall stand in our lot at the end of the days. When the shepherds of large flocks of sheep cannot succeed in separating the dams from the rest, because their young ones are among them, they will carry away the lambs in their arms to a better pasture, and then the dams willingly follow. Ah! "the Good Shepherd" has often to adopt the same method! To separate His chosen ones from the rest of the world, He is compelled to carry away the lambs of the human flock in His warm bosom to heaven; and then bereaved parents gladly

follow. The poet has drawn a very beautiful and touching simile from this well-known practice of pastoral life :—

“ A shepherd long had sought in vain
To call a wandering sheep;
He strove to make its pathway plain
Through dangers thick and deep.

But yet the wanderer stood aloof,
And still refused to come;
Nor would she ever hear reproof,
Or turn to seek her home.

At last the gentle shepherd took
Her little lambs from view!
The mother gazed with anguished look—
She turned—and followed too!”

In all the chastening dispensations of our Heavenly Father there is one consideration we too frequently lose sight of, the importance and magnitude of which we cannot at present grasp, but which will be gloriously actualized in our future and eternal condition. St. Paul states it thus—“ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”—2 Cor. iv. 17. O, our song of immortality—if our earthly trials and bereavements have been

sanctified—will, in heaven, be so much the more sweet and rapturous, our thrones so much the more elevated and glorious, and our diadems so much the more bright and splendid! The late Dr. Payson, when engaged in paying pastoral visits to his spiritual flock, happened one day to enter “the house of mourning,” and there he found a disconsolate mother, whose darling child had just been “taken from the evil to come,” whom he thus addressed:—“Suppose, now, some one was making a beautiful crown for you to wear; and you knew it was for you; and that you were to receive it, and wear it as soon as it should be done. Now, if the maker of it were to come, and, in order to make the crown more beautiful and splendid, were to take some of *your jewels* to put into it, should you be sorrowful and unhappy, because they were taken away for a little while, when you knew they were gone to make up your crown?” The sorrow-pierced heart of the mourning parent was at once quieted and soothed by this exquisitely-beautiful and simple illustration. It is by the dark seasons of the night which is far spent, that we are prepared for the dazzling effulgence

of the eternal day. The undisturbed calm of the celestial world will be valued so much the more after the boisterous and destructive blasts of this; and the perpetual companionships and deep joys of the world to come will be the better prized after the bitter disappointments and painful ruptures of this lower estate !

CHAPTER IV.

THE GLORIOUS EXCHANGE.

“ O weep not for the dead
Who early pass away,
Ere hope, and joy, and youth have fled,
And woe has wrought decay !
Better to die in youth,
When life is green and bright,
Than when the heart has lost its truth
In age and sorrow's night—
Then woes and years around us throng,
And death's chill grasp is on us long !”

“ BLESSED God ! Thou hast often taught us lessons in the shade we should never have learned in the sunshine.” Such was the holy exclamation of a late eminent divine, who had known the heart of the mourner, and had felt the sanctified benefit of severe affliction. How many Christian parents can subscribe to the same truth ! The effect of bereavement, when sanctified, is of the most salutary and blessed kind. At the onset of the severe trial, which

severed from their hearts a beloved object, the bereaved who murmured loud and long against the decree of God, and styled it undeserved and cruel, when the sharp pangs of poignant grief have subsided, have taken a calm and just view of divine dealing, and found, where they thought there was only stern justice or cruelty, nothing but unmingled goodness and love. They no longer murmuringly ask—why are our beloved children taken away from our arms?—why are they removed who were so promising, and on whom so many bright hopes rested?—and why does God require such a sacrifice of parental affection and youthful loveliness? They recognize His sovereign right to take back, when it pleaseth Him, the boons that were lent them only for a season. The design in the resumption of the gifts of the “heritage of the Lord” is both seen and felt; the smiting hand is kissed; and the heart and life are directed to nobler pursuits than earth and time can present. The eclat and favour of the world is no longer courted as essential to human happiness. Jehovah resumes His throne on the highest and best affections of the sanctified heart. And

the Eternal Spirit returns to transform and bless. Many Christian parents can therefore say, experimentally, with the royal Psalmist—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes."—PSALM CXIX. 71.

Nor are bereaving dispensations always lost on unconverted parents. In many happy instances conversion has resulted from them. The mind has been awakened to serious meditation on death and eternity, and the heart has been smitten by the Holy Spirit with penitential sorrow. By faith they "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them," and commenced to live the new life of love and holiness. Many an unchanged parent has first bended the stubborn knee at the mercy-seat by the coffin of his dead child, and in the chamber of death made the first covenant resolve with the God of heaven. Would to God that every bereaved and unrenewed parent did the same! It is a solemnly sad thought that, though the great spoiler takes away "the delight of the eyes," and destroys many "pleasant pictures," and makes strange and desolate the habitations of the children of men, there

are numbers whom such dispensations confirm in their sins, rather than producing a holy reformation in their lives. Like Pharaoh, the more Jehovah visits them with His judgments, the more they harden their hearts against Him. "Therefore they say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?"—JOB xxi. 14, 15. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; into their assembly, mine honour be not thou united!" How awful will it be for the branch to be saved, and the stock to perish!

In the preceding chapter we have attempted to show—as far as we could gather from Scripture, and the experience of believers—the design of God in the premature death of infants, which tends to the improvement of the spiritual condition of the afflicted disciples of Jesus: and, in so doing, have dispelled much of the mist and fog which often seems to settle upon God's dealings. A more pleasing task now awaits us. We have to set forth some of the blessed and glorious results flowing from such dispensations to infants themselves, and to

prove that our loss is their infinite gain, and that the exchange of worlds has been to them an advantage infinitely beyond the conception of the human mind, or the power of language to describe. "It would be a terrible world, I do think," said one of the greatest philosophical divines of the age, "if it was not embellished by little children; *but* — it would be a far more terrible one *if little children did not die!* Many, I dare say, would be shocked by this assertion. It may be true, however, nevertheless." It is our province to demonstrate briefly that this is the philosophy of wisdom and truth.

Sin has introduced into the world not only the law of mortality, but the law of suffering. Wherever there is sin, there must be physical and mental pain. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."—JOB v. 7. Evilness lies thick on the human pathway. Disease, like a beast of prey, or the rapacious vulture, is ever on the alert to secure its destined victim. All the things about us, and on us, are infected with a cureless taint of mortality, and perish before our eyes. The air we breathe into the lungs is laden with contagion and death; the water we drink to

quench thirst, and the bread we eat to satisfy the cravings of hunger, are impregnated with poisonous and destructive elements. The deep, hollow cough—the bright hectic flush—the gradual wasting away—the hot burning fever—the racking pain, are among the sure concomitants of protracted existence—the fatal instrumentalities with which the grim tyrant destroys humanity. And, then, there are perplexing anxieties, and corroding cares, known in this imperfect economy, which, like canker-worms, eat away the very vitals of terrestrial happiness; and the bitterness of heart which cannot be expressed to a fellow through the vehicle of language. Warm-hearted friendship becomes cold as death, and the averted countenance tacitly proclaims the loss of another's esteem. *Here*, all is hollow, and deceptive, and fluctuating, and struggle, and storm. Men have to labour like slaves, and frequently to die as martyrs, in their earthly avocations and enterprises. There are also losses of reputation and fortune; and, perhaps, added to all this, as a climax to mortal anguish, the bereavement of dear infants and beloved friends.

The poets have represented life as a tempesta-

tuous ocean, and man as a ship battling and floundering with its terrific breakers. The poetic simile is as true as it is beautiful. Life is indeed a dangerous ocean on which to navigate. Few reach the opposite shore without encountering severe gales, and few without becoming a total wreck. On its swelling waves thousands are struggling hard to live—on its rocky shores thousands are dashed to pieces! Now, could bereaved parents insure to their offsprings an exemption from the general sorrows and sufferings to which flesh is naturally exposed, there would then be some ground of reason for their murmurings at the dark ways of Providence, and for their intense desire to retain them in the present scene when God wishes to remove them hence: but they cannot promise anything of the kind. Their measure of joy or sorrow—prosperity or adversity—health or sickness, is determined by the Ruler of the World. “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”—PROV. XVI. 33. Under the whole of the painful circumstances to which allusion has been made, can the death of infants be considered anything besides an act of divine

mercy—a development of divine pitifulness? They who die early know little or nothing of the incompleteness, and dangers, and tears of this lower estate. They no sooner tasted the “vinegar mixed with gall,” than, like the suffering Christ, they refused the bitter draught, and died. The streamlet turned back to its source. The exotic proved too tender for the cold air of our world—the flower too delicate for its keen blasts. Did they see the white foam breaking on the dark waters before them, and shrink away with fear? Did they behold the disappointments and struggles of earth, and feel themselves utterly unable to cope with them? Or, as they left the starting-post of humanity, and commenced running the journey of life, did they perceive both dangers and foes lying in their pathway, and instantly retreat into the arms of death, and the hiding-place of the grave, for shelter? We cannot tell what they saw, nor yet how far their knowledge extended: but we know that there is an eye which sweeps over the universe with a single glance, and which seeth “the end from the beginning:” — there is One who “knoweth all things,” and who “ordereth all

things," and who, according to divine foresight, sees fit to snap the thread of life in its weakest part—to transplant the tender flower to a genial clime, and to take the weak lambkin back to His warm bosom. He who lighted up life in the tabernacle of infancy, quenched it, certainly not without a great reason. He beheld the gathering storm the moment the young bark was launched on life's rough sea, and He opened for it an asylum and harbour in His own loving heart and eternal home! Thus, the victory was achieved before the battle was fought;—the "crown of righteousness" pressed the forehead, ere the crushing pressure of the cross was felt on the shoulders;—the celestial guerdon was obtained, before the work of the day was done;—the goal of life was reached, without running the exhausting race;—the harvest of glory was gathered, almost before the seed was sown!

"God took thee in His mercy,
A lamb untasked, untried;
He fought the fight for thee,
He won the victory,
And thou art sanctified."

The early death of children is an unmistakable

proof of divine favouritism. God takes them away from the evil to come. He removes them to that happy and tranquil region where the cold blast never sweeps, and the acute sorrow is never known, and the big tear-drop is never shed. We have read of a beautiful infant, who had been taught by its pious parents to say—"God will take care of baby." It was afflicted, and given up to die, just when its parents were recovering from a severe and dangerous illness. But the mother must see her dying child once again, to have one maternal embrace more this side heaven, and one look of love through its bright blue eye, ere it died. Just as the father and mother succeeded in reaching the apartment of the dying one, it was thought that its spirit had winged its glad flight to the upper world ; but the mother's loud and piercing lamentation exposed the general mistake. The dying child opened its blue eyes once more, smiled its last smile, and, in a faint and almost inaudible utterance, said,—“ God will take care of baby,” and then died, and attendant angels bore its emancipated spirit away on their broad, strong pinions to the throne of Everlasting Love ! “ The Lord gave, and the

Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."—JQB I. 21.

Those who die early are, moreover, removed from the moral contamination of the world, and the influence of bad example. All parents are not converted characters; and hence their example must be more or less prejudicial to the weal of their offsprings. Example is contagious: it has in it elements of moral good or evil, which stereotype themselves on the hearts and early develop themselves in the lives of the junior race. It has a potent influence to call into full play that innate proneness to evil which is characteristic of fallen humanity. Children, too, are naturally imitative, and their parents are the models they naturally copy. From them they receive impressions which form their characters, and abide with them for their life-time, perhaps for ever. Example is, therefore, the most powerful and influential teacher in the world. A fiend may teach the most beautiful and consistent theory of morals, but his dark and hellish conduct would do infinitely more harm than his theory would good. A wrong act, a careless utterance, sometimes settles deep down in a child's heart, and

germinates, and bears fruit in future days of the most awful character and destructive tendency. By such exhibitions and utterances, many a parent has darkened his home for ever, and gone softly all his days in the bitterness of his soul. The child has become a literal and living type of its sire, and trod in the downward path leading to death. Or it might have been that parental example was virtuous, and amiable, and Christian, and the youth has left home well disposed and religiously inclined. But his destiny has been fixed amongst sceptical artizans and very depraved and abandoned young men. For a while he resists manfully the influence of unholy example, and the taunts and sneers of infidelity. His mother's tearful entreaty, his sister's anxious look, and his father's sage and emphatic counsel, act as counteracting elements to the ruin environing him on every side. But the tide at last flows too strong for him to stem; his moral strength fails him; and he is borne away towards the gulf of irretrievable ruin by the impetuous current of a debauched and dissipated life.

Alas! how many promising youths have disappointed the high hopes of their sanguine

parents! The polluting atmosphere in which their lot was unhappily cast blasted the healthy bloom of moral principle. Like "the first rose of summer," it was as transient as it was beautiful. Outward pressure was too powerful for inward principle. Their "sun went down while it was yet day." O how many fond parents have wished they had laid their children in the cold grave whilst in infancy, rather than live to witness their subsequent fallen career! How many parents go down to the grave mourning because of the unrestrained profligacy of their households!

"The snare is before them, the pang and the sorrow,

The breath of the syren, the voice of the rod,
The crime of to-day, the despair of to-morrow,
And all that can sever the soul from its God."

Now, when children are removed by death to that bright and blessed world, across whose golden threshold "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh an abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life,"—REV. xxi. 27—they escape all the influences and consequences of evil example, whe-

ther exhibited by their unconverted parents, or by abandoned associates. They are snatched from moral contamination. They are removed ere their virtues have been tested by powerful temptations, or their characters marred and stained by human infirmity and guilt, or their hearts wounded by the poisonous shafts of hell. They become the companions of unfallen angels—of patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and “the noble army of martyrs.” They are shut in with God, and are, therefore, for ever beyond the reach of temptation and sin. Is it not better, then, as the pious Flavel has it—“to weep for ten dead children, than for one living one?”

“I look around and see
The evil ways of men ;
And oh ! beloved child !
I'm more than reconcil'd
To thy departure then.”

What an inconceivably blissful change little children make at death ! Looking at bereavement with the eye of sense, Christian parents give their departed ones to the grave, to be food for worms ; but with the eye of faith they perceive they have given them to heaven, to

swell the already countless number of blood-washed spirits crowding its golden streets—to share in its deep joys—to bask in its fadeless glories—to chant its immortal songs! “For of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Our “morning stars” are set in the diadem of Christ, where they sparkle with undying brilliancy! They beautify the heavens. They are favoured with the immediate presence of the Eternal. Jesus said—“Their angels do always behold the face of my Father in heaven.” They bend before the “Majesty on High.” They worship within the veil of the celestial sanctuary: their song is the sweetest in the heavenly choir: their band is the largest in the New Jerusalem. They roam in fields of perpetual verdure, and on the banks of the river of life, whose waters are clear as crystal. No driving storm sweeps round those everlasting hills up which they climb. A peace more profound than that which sleeps on the ripless lake, or the waveless firmament, dwells in their bosom, and characterizes their Sabbatical rest! Neither sin, nor sorrow, nor death, are permitted to darken or break up their beatitude. No jar—no discord is known, or felt, in their

abiding home. The assembly they have entered never breaks up; the holy bond which unites them is strong as eternity. They dwell in light, whose dazzling splendour can never be eclipsed.—“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”—REV. XXII. 5. O how infinitely superior is their condition to ours! We dwell in time, they in eternity. We are praying, and wrestling, and toiling hard to gain the blessed shore; they have reached the land that is afar off, and behold the King of glory in His unveiled beauty. We are in a world of change and vicissitude; they dwell in His presence, where there is fullness of joy, and at His right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. No change—no circumstance—no contingency, can affect them now. O blessed and glorious change from time to eternity—from winter to spring—from night to day—from misery to joy—from death to life—from earth to heaven! How exquisitely beautiful is the poetic reply which the noted Mrs. Hemans made to her youthful enquirer regarding the splendour and locality of the

everlasting home prepared by Christ, and now occupied by our departed little children !—

“ Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy !
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy ;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair ;
Sorrow and death may not enter there ;
Time may not breathe on its fadeless bloom ;
Far beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb ;—
It is there—it is there, my child ! ”

In one sense it is touching to think that those little things which once were all life and laughter—all play and merriment, should so soon be cut off ; but when we recollect the glorified and blissful state into which death has introduced them, we are more than reconciled to their hasty exodus. With this consoling view many Christian parents have consigned to the dust the mortal remains of their dead children with a mournful satisfaction that “ all is well.” Or if, when the dull heavy clods of the valley rattled rudely upon the tiny coffin which concealed the stiff and stark form of their earthly treasures, they gave way to the irresistible impetuosity of grief, and the wounded heart felt its severest and deepest stab, yet, when the tide of bereaved sorrow had rolled its heaviest surge, they have calmed down into a

resigned and holy tranquillity by the exceedingly comforting thought, that the "Good Shepherd" has gathered their little lambs in His bosom, and that they are for ever safe, and for ever happy. Their chief solace is to think of their eternal blessedness, and their chief stay is the hope of re-union and recognition in heaven.

Such, then, is the glorious exchange which little children make at death. We had almost said—if such be the blessed results—then let the young voyager be stranded the moment the frail and tiny bark is launched on life's foaming breakers! Let the little cradle become a little hospital, instead of the infant sojourner's place of rest and repose! Let the "reaper, whose name is Death," cut down, "with his sickle keen," the opening flower as well as the golden grain! And let the short graves of our burying-places exceed the stars of the midnight sky, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven!"

Compassionate Jesus! we see Thy love and mercy in gathering the little lambs into Thy bosom, and sheltering them in Thy celestial fold!

CHAPTER V.

CELESTIAL PEARLS.

“For thou hast gained a brighter land,
And death's cold stream is past;
Thine are the joys at God's right hand,
Which shall for ever last.

A crown is on thine angel-brow,
Thine eye the King doth see,
Thy home is with the seraphs now,
We joy that thou art free!”

IN the preceding pages we have drawn a faint outline-picture of the glorious exchange which little children make at death, and of the beatitude into which they are then ushered. A very interesting and important enquiry, in connection with this delightful representation, now presents and forces itself upon our attention:—How are little children, who are “born in sin,” and by nature are fallen and corrupt, prepared and fitted, in their brief sojourn on earth, for the purity, and bliss, and society of heaven? On this momentous point many

theories have been propounded, some of which have been widely embraced, whilst others have been rejected *in toto*. Some have asserted that little children are not naturally corrupt, that their nature, in infancy, is as pure as the snow-flake as it falls from the winter's sky, and that it is only by necessary connection with—and the evil example of—the adult classes, they are contaminated and ruined. We are free to confess that evil example is very pernicious to young children, but evil example, whilst it may and does injure them, is not alone, or primarily, the cause of their ruin. Now, if this theory were true, then no divine change is needful to be wrought in the hearts of those young infants who depart this life before they can possibly be injured by earthly and carnal associations. Unfallen and undefiled creatures cannot need the application of “the blood” which “cleanseth from all sin,” nor the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. But this theory is not scriptural; it is as far from “the truth” as “the east is from the west.” The Bible invariably teaches that *all* are “shapen in iniquity,” and “*all* have sinned,” without

a solitary exception. Since the fall of Adam, not a single child has been conceived and born, save "the holy child Jesus," but was deeply and thoroughly infected with original depravity. Some great and divine change must therefore pass upon little children, or they cannot enter heaven; for the affirmation of the Great Teacher to Nicodemus is as applicable to them as to others:—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—JOHN III. 5. Heaven is truly a holy place: holiness is its grandest and chiefest characteristic. Nothing, therefore, of an unholy nature, or tendency, can enter or dwell there. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."—REV. XXI. 27. But, supposing little children, or adults, could be admitted into heaven without a renewed nature, heaven would be no heaven to either. Not possessing a nature congenial to the holy place, and the blissful state, its very raptures would intensify the misery of their wretched

bosoms—its very brightness would darken, with a more profound blackness, the night of everlasting ruin enveloping their unsanctified souls—the ravishing melody of its golden harps would only touch and thrill the cords of despair within their unhappy hearts, and “they would gladly,” as the Rev. George Whitfield once said, “fly to hell for shelter!” An unforgiven and unsanctified spirit will carry its hell with it wherever it may go! A change, then, in the nature of infants, as well as in adults, is absolutely indispensable before either can be permitted to pass through the pearl-flashing gates into the City of God.

There is only one way of salvation for humanity, and that way is through the cross and atonement of Jesus. “Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”—ACTS IV. 12. Now, from this emphatic passage, and others of a like teaching, it is certain that if infants are saved at all, they must be saved according to the conditions, or terms, of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, and by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. Some, who have supposed

salvation, and the regenerative influences of the Holy Spirit, to be inseparably associated with a personal act of faith in Christ, have questioned whether little children are at all capable of regeneration, because they have not the power to repent, and are physically unable to form a right conception of "the truth as it is in Jesus," and cannot, therefore, be, as adults are, enlightened and sanctified by its holy instrumentality. Dr. Dwight believes, however, that little children can be subjects of faith, and he meets such an objector and his objection in this way:—"John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb; and was unquestionably a subject of faith in such a manner that, had he died in infancy, he would certainly have been received to heaven. What was true of him can be true of any other infant." Now this, we think, is forcing the point beyond the limits of possibility. We believe that children, before they have reached the age of responsibility, are utterly incapable of the exercise of evangelical faith, because they have not the power to apprehend the grand fact to be believed. Dr. Buchanan, in his able volume

on the Office and Work of the Holy Spirit, advocates a more rational theory. He says:—
“There is a marked peculiarity in the case of infants, and a difference betwixt their case and that of adults, which cannot be overlooked. For not only is there, in the case of infants, no actual sin, such as has been contracted by every one who has reached the age of distinct personal responsibility, but there is at first no capacity of thought, or understanding, such as could render them fit subjects for the operation of that truth which is, in the case of adults, the instrument by which the Spirit of God carries on His work in the heart.” If, then, it is a physical impossibility for little children to believe the truth of the Gospel, may we not reasonably infer therefrom that God, who is all love and truth, will bestow salvation without such a personal exercise? If divine sovereignty left them beneath the upas tree under which the sire of human kind died, is it presumption to state that the same sovereignty also places little children, prior to their being gathered into eternity, beneath the refreshing and sanctifying shades of the tree of life, whose “fruit is for food, and whose leaves are for the

healing of the nations?" We cannot believe the contrary. Surely God can bestow salvation without—as well as with—means, and the Holy Ghost can transform and sanctify independent of faith, as well as in conjunction with it! Such, doubtless, is the case in regard to deceased infants. The eminent commentator, Scott, in his observations on MATT. XIX. 13-15, says—"Infants are as capable of regeneration as grown persons; and there is abundant ground to conclude, that all those who have not lived to commit actual transgression, though they share in the effects of the first Adam's offence, will also share in the second Adam's gracious covenant, without their personal faith and obedience, but not without the regenerating influences of the spirit of Christ." If they were capable of being infected with the virus of original sin, they must be as capable of receiving the remedying process. If they were capable of receiving the Saviour's blessing, they must be as capable of receiving the Holy Spirit's influences. If they are to receive the sign, by baptism, of "an inward and spiritual grace," surely they are

as capable of receiving the thing signified. "Where repentance cannot exist," says the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, "though there be the negation of moral good, there cannot be moral turpitude; where there is no such turpitude, there can be no bar, or obstacle, morally considered, which should prevent the interposition of power to produce holy principle as a qualification for ultimate happiness." There is, then, a broad line of demarcation to be drawn betwixt helpless infants and responsible agents, as far as the necessity of evangelical faith is concerned. The former, *because they cannot believe*, are saved without a personal trust in Christ; the latter, *because they can believe*, are never saved without the exercise of such a holy principle. The same precious blood has ransomed both, and the same blessed Spirit sanctifies both. In the simple, and beautiful scriptural language of the Westminster Confession—"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound

thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."—JOHN III. 8.

One of the most pleasing and animating thoughts in connection with this subject which bereaved Christian parents can cherish is—that the golden streets of the New Jerusalem will be crowded with little children ! So the Great Redeemer and Prophet of the Church has assured us, under the following interesting circumstances :—" Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His Hands on them, and pray : and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come to me : *for of such is the kingdom of heaven.* And He laid His hands on them, and departed thence." —MATT. XIX. 13-15. This is the evangelistic record of one of the most touching incidents in the eventful history of Jesus. What a noble and godlike nature does it unfold for our contemplation and admiration !—a nature which shines the brighter being placed in contrast with that of his rude and unfeeling disciples. Like the dark cloud, which sets forth more clearly and gloriously the beautiful colours of

the rainbow, their cruel and repulsive doings brought out more vividly and strikingly the love of Jesus to the infant race. Or perhaps it was not sheer cruelty which led them to deal unkindly with maternal solicitude and smiling childhood: they might have thought, as too many do now-a-days, that such very young children were uninteresting objects; and, regarding, as they did, the Saviour and His mission with profound interest, they might have imagined that to notice such, and to bless them, was alike derogatory to the dignity of His character and the glory of His mission. Perhaps their hearts were not so cold and cruel, as their opinions were narrow and erroneous. But, supposing either or both were the case, it is a truly delightful fact that neither prevented the manifestation of the deep and divine regard of the God-Man to little children. He breathed over them, and on them, the richest benedictions. He beheld, through the thick veil hiding the eternal world from human ken, "ten thousand times ten thousand" spirits, bending and basking beneath the splendours of the throne of God; but the largest group—the vast majority—was composed of little children;

and He assigned this as a satisfactory and sublime reason why they should be brought to Him, and why He should take them up, and encircle their fair and fragile forms within the arms of Almighty and Everlasting Love, and bless them,—“for of *such* is the kingdom of heaven!” O, it must indeed have been a magnificent sight to have beheld Him putting forth His miracle-working power in giving sight to the visionless eye-ball—in cooling the burning fever with a touch—in calming the tempestuous waters, and raising the dead, with the majestic utterance of a few mighty and resistless words! But to see Him taking those smiling little children up in His arms, whom His disciples had treated so rudely and cruelly, and to hear the God of Blessing pronounce a cluster of benizons on them, though it may lack the grandeur and wonderfulness attendant on the display of His omnipotent power, was, nevertheless, a scene second to none in the history of His remarkable and holy life on earth! At that moment, and in that act, Jesus was seen to be “full of grace and truth,” as well as majesty and love! Had angels been there in human guise, and could they have

wept, they would certainly have been moved to tears of joy!

But this touching incident was not only a manifestation of the tender and godlike regard which Christ showed to the young race of immortality, it was also a confirmation of the fact that little children obtain the majority of the blessed in heaven. We are aware that disputes have arisen amongst theological writers with reference to the precise meaning of the Saviour when He said,—“for *of such* is the kingdom of heaven.” A few have thought He spoke symbolically, and have paraphrased His holy language thus:—“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, because the kingdom of heaven is composed of Christians who have a childlike disposition.” Others, and by far the most numerous, and eminent, and profound, have sanctioned the literal and ordinary acceptance of the terms, and the natural application of the whole passage to infants, which seems to be both easy and consistent. God forbid that we should mar the native beauty, and contract the generous catholicity of this precious utterance! The soul sickens when we think of heathenish Roman-

ism, and the like systems of Satan, ruining thousands upon thousands of souls; but, O, the relief to turn from such damning systems, and from the millions who are rushing along the broad road "in such dreadful haste to die," and to think of redeemed little children peopling the realms of light, and crowding the streets of the City of God! Jesus Christ told His disciples that the presence and company "of such" in "the kingdom of heaven," would form one great feature of its beatitude. We delight, therefore, to think of our hereafter and eternal home being so full of little children. To every rightly-balanced mind there is nothing on earth more attractive than harmless and smiling infants. They make a kind of Paradise wherever they are. What a heaven, then, must that be where they obtain the majority! How beautiful, on this point, are the lines of the late Montgomery to a bereaved parent!—

"I saw thine infant's spirit rise to heaven,
Caught from its birth up to the throne of God.
There, thousands and ten thousands I beheld
Of innocents like this, that died untimely,
By violence of their unnatural kin,
Or by the mercy of that gracious Power
Who gave them being, taking what He gave
Ere they could sin, or suffer, like their parents.

I saw them in white raiment, crowned with flowers,
On the fair banks of that resplendent river
Whose streams make glad the city of our God."

But our satisfaction is not completed with the blessed thought of the present felicity and safety of our departed infants, though that is infinitely beyond what we could desire or conceive. We look for the resurrection of their corrupting bodies, which, like seed sown in the earth, will spring up again more beautiful and glorious at the resurrection of the just. Christianity has wreathed the garland of hope around their dying brows, and scattered the gloom from off their tiny graves. Deprived of their mortal breath, and for ever released from physical suffering, "they sleep in Jesus." But the day of final redemption is drawing on, when their quiet slumbers will be broken in upon by the loud and shrill blasts of the angel's trumpet, and they will awake to life and bliss, never to slumber again. The much-tried and often-bereaved Matthew Henry, after he had buried a dear child, wrote in his diary as follows:—"Here is now a pretty little garment laid up in the wardrobe of the grave, to be worn again at the resurrection. Blessed be God for

the hope of this! I endeavoured, when the child was put in the grave, to act faith upon the doctrine of the resurrection, believing in Him who quickeneth the dead."

Some have questioned the resurrection of the bodies of little children, because they died in an infantile and imperfect human state. Such sceptical questioning has no scriptural ground to rest upon at all: for if Jesus Christ has died to redeem them from perishing, and if they are made partakers of a divine nature during their brief sojourn on earth, then their resurrection from the dead results as an absolute and glorious sequel. The teachings of the Sacred Oracles on this vastly-interesting point are harmonious, explicit, and satisfactory. "For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive. But every man in his own order."—1 Cor. xv. 22, 23. But turn we for a moment or two to the sublime enunciations of the Fountain of Wisdom on the resurrection of the dead, and we shall find this stupendous doctrine even more emphatically and distinctly brought forth by Him who shall one day raise the entire race of mortality. The pitiful Saviour regarded

this fallen world as a “Golgotha”—a vast and universal burying-ground! Everywhere He saw groups of mourners—long processions of weeping friends—broken-hearted parents lingering round little graves, loath to leave their treasures for the spoil of the greedy earth-worms—widowed mothers, like the poor woman of Nain, following to the sepulchre the mortal remains of their only sons—bereaved sisters, like the Bethany females, sorrowing that pious brothers had died!—He saw the many scalding tears which ploughed their passage down the cheek which had been paled by nightly vigils by the couch of the dead, and the deep grief which was devouring within the heart! He heard the profound and thrilling dirge of the pierced and bleeding heart of humanity, as it was uttered beside the bed of the dying, as it fell on the margin of the grave, and as it reverberated round the world! And what He saw with His keen eye, and heard with His ever-open ear, stirred the deep and generous sympathies of His noble nature, and He exclaimed:—“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and

shall come forth.”—JOHN v. 28, 29.—Man and youth, male and female, the patriarch of “fourscore years,” and the “infant of days.” The insatiate tomb will then yield forth all the treasures it has been collecting for ages. Death will be abolished; his iron sceptre will be broken; his throne will be crushed into ruins; and his empire scattered as the mists before the morning sun, by the second appearing of Christ! In the nervous and sublime language of Dr. Harris—“Many of the greatest empires of antiquity are not only extinct, and their boundaries effaced, but even the seat of their power is only to be known by coloured dust in the desert, or by coloured sand, washed up by the waves of a stormy sea; but of the empire of death, not a vestige shall be left—not a particle of dust, if searched for, shall remain for its memorial: life, an ocean of victorious life, shall overflow and swallow it up!” “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of *all* which He hath given me *I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*”—JOHN vi. 40. Little children, therefore, as well as others, must be raised from the dead: and they will be raised,

in size, as little children, and not as some have supposed, with bodies perfect in corporeal stature;* for Christ speaks of them as "little children" in the hereafter condition, and describes heaven as the children's kingdom—"for of *such* is the kingdom of heaven." "Poor dear little Madeleine, there thou art now," exclaimed Martin Luther, when his dead child was laid on the funeral bier. "Thou shalt rise again; thou shalt shine as a star; yes, as the sun!" O, there is something unspeakably glorious and consoling in the precious scriptural dogma of the resurrection of the body! Even the erring and sceptical Lord Byron, when lying on his deathbed, could exclaim—"The thought of living eternally—of again reviving—is a great pleasure!" Our dead infants will as surely live again as they lived at all. The mortal prison-house, which has engaoled them in its dark chambers, shall throw wide open its strong doors at the voice of the Son of Man, and "they shall come forth." We shall receive them again, with this mighty difference—the mortal shall have

* See "The Hope of the Bereaved." 2nd Ed. Page 56, &c.

put on immortality—the corruptible shall have put on incorruption! “And there shall be no more death.”

As every ransomed and glorified spirit will have its appropriate employment in heaven, it has often been asked—on what will little children be everlastingly engaged?—what sphere, or rank, will they occupy in the realms of light?

“An infant’s soul—the sweetest thing on earth,
To which endowments beautiful are given,
As might befit a more than mortal birth—
What shall it be, when midst its winning mirth,
And love, and trustfulness, ’tis borne to heaven?
Will it grow into might above the skies—
A spirit of high wisdom, glory, power—
A cherub-guard of the Eternal Tower,
With knowledge fill’d of its vast mysteries?
Or will perpetual childhood be its dower—
To sport for ever, a bright, joyous thing,
Amid the wonders of the shining thrones,
Yielding its praise in glad and treble tones,
A tender dove beneath the Almighty’s wing?”

Nothing is said directly on this inquisitive enquiry in Divine Revelation: something, however, may be drawn inferentially from inspired and celestial representation.

The principal employment of the blessed in heaven—which constitutes no small portion of

its conceivable beatitude—is that of worship and adoration. “And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” —REV. iv. 8. In the Apocalypse we are frequently taught that each glorified spirit will have a particular sphere appointed him, and each will be engaged on that particular employment which is congenial to that sphere; consequently, little children will occupy a sphere peculiar to themselves. We cannot tell by what process their latent powers will be drawn out, expanded, and elevated, to meet celestial requirement. Those checks and obstructions which impede the development and action of the powers of the mind on earth, will be unknown and unfelt in heaven. And who can tell how readily and completely the mind will then burst forth, like the bud under the bright and warm rays of the sun, into an astonishing beauty and vigour? Where there are no barriers, that immortal principle of our being must unfold its noble powers at once, and exert itself with a freedom and enthusiasm which would throw into the shade the proudest and brightest earthly philosopher. As little

children are eminently fitted to take a conspicuous part in the everlasting services of the celestial sanctuary, we reasonably conclude that they will be chiefly engaged, with others, in hymning, with glowing rapture, the wonders of redeeming love. They will sustain in heaven a position similar to the young sons of the Levites in the Hebrew temple, who entered the court of the priests with their fathers, that their small, shrill voices might relieve the deep bass of the senior singers. They throng the inner courts of "the temple of God," and are nearest the throne of the "King of Glory." There will be a full choir of redeemed voices, and there will be a perfectly harmonious diapason in the immortal anthem chanted in the ear of the Most High. If the largest band in heaven will be composed of little children—as we believe it will—then the major part of the celestial choristers will be little infants. They will take the treble part of "the new song before the throne." The sweetest and the loudest notes in the concordant symphony of the skies will issue from infant harps and infant voices. Their melody will be so perfect and transporting that listening seraphs will be

struck with rapt wonderment, and charmed by its deep, thrilling cadence! They will derive new joy and rapture from the songs of little children in heaven! And O, how sweet to the ear—how ravishing to the heart of Jesus—will be the sound of infant voices around His throne? In the days of His flesh they gladly joined the enthusiastic multitude who cheered Him on his way from Mount Olivet to the city of Jerusalem, and sang—"Hosannah to the Son of David." And when the excited procession reached the temple, their shrill voices were heard above the rest, magnifying "the King of Glory." Their sweet music, and juvenile enthusiasm, were then pleasing to the heart of the Saviour: how much more so will they be in heaven! Though the anthem-peal of salvation will be "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder," coming from the voices of "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," yet, clear and distinct above the rest—as the overwhelming song swells and fills the arches of the heavenly temple—will be heard the shrill, sweet voices of redeemed young children!

It is truly delightful to visit our Sabbath

schools on the morning of "the pearl of days," and listen to their treble voices, pouring into the ear of Incarnate Love the glorious melodies of redeeming mercy, and to be welcomed with their sunny smile to the holy duties of the Christian Sabbath! We have often thought that such sights are strikingly emblematical of the heavenly condition, and such engagements typical of the employments of the Sabbatical rest of the skies. The late Rev. William Jay, in endeavouring to console bereaved Christian parents with the hope of meeting again and recognising their departed offsprings, made use of the same idea.—"And may you not," says he, "indulge the expectation, not only that you will know them, but be serviceable to them—be employed in forming and in teaching them? O the pleasing work of a mother, to rear a child in that better country, free from sin, perverseness, pain;—without anxiety, and without fear!" The late Christian poet—Montgomery—also entertained the same views of the employments of the world to come, both as it regards those of little children and adult believers. Both the divine and the poet, long ere this, have, doubtless, had their views

ratified by a personal participation in the blessed state of "the whole family in heaven."

"Beneath the shadow of the Tree of Life
 I mark'd those rescued infants, in their schools,
 By 'spirits of just men made perfect' taught
 The glorious lessons of Almighty love,
 Which brought them thither, by the readiest path,
 From the world's wilderness of dire temptations,
 Securing thus their everlasting weal.
 Yea, in the rapture of that hour, tho' songs
 Of cherubim to golden lyres and trumpets,
 And the redeemed upon the sea of glass,
 With voices like the sound of many waters,
 Came in mine ear, whose secret cells were opened
 To entertain celestial harmonies ;—
 The small, sweet accents of those little children,
 Pouring out all the gladness of their souls
 In love, joy, gratitude, and praise to Him ;—
 HIM, who had loved and washed them in His
 blood ;—

These were to me the most transporting strains,
 Amidst the hallelujahs of all heaven !

* * * * *

The harp of heaven
 Had lack'd its least, but not its meanest string,
 Had children not been taught to play upon it,
 And sing, from feelings all their own, what men
 Nor angels can conceive of, creatures, born
 Under the curse, yet from the curse redeem'd,
 And plac'd at once beyond the power to fall."

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION.

“When I can trust my all with God,
In trial’s fearful hour;
Bow all resign’d beneath His rod,
And bless His sparing power;
A joy springs up amid distress,
A fountain in the wilderness.

O blessed be the hand that gave,
Still blessed when it takes :
Blessed be He who smites to save,
Who heals the heart He breaks :
Perfect and true are all His ways,
Whom heaven adores and death obeys.”

THERE is nothing strange in the fiery trials which are continually happening to the saint : they are necessary to him ; and are heaven-stamped badges of his discipleship with Jesus. Was his path without piercing thorns—his life without deep sorrows—his voyage undisturbed by fierce gales, such exemption would be demonstrative of the non-possession of the

principle and life of Christianity. Earthly trials are chief parts of divine discipline, and may truly be regarded as confirmations of the reality of our adoption and sonship. They are also, as we have already shown, some of the richest and most profitable channels of spiritual and immortal good. It is when the fierce storm has raged, and spent itself by its own violence, and the rain has fallen long and heavy, that the river no longer ripples murmuringly over its stony bed, but sweeps along in deep and noiseless volume. And it is generally after the heavy strokes of the chastising rod, and the bereaving dispensations of Divine Providence, that the peace and joy of the believing soul is the sweetest and most profound. Gifford tells us of a pious gentleman who, when a few kind friends offered him condolence on the loss of a beloved son, said,—“I would be content, was it possible to lose a son every day in the year, might I but be favoured with such manifestations of God’s presence and love as I have experienced on the present occasion.” The way of the God-favoured Hebrews from Egypt to Canaan lay through a wilderness of briars and thorns; and many were the difficulties and

the foes with which they had to contend, and over which they had to triumph, ere they could reach that goodly country. But how transcendently glorious the finale! When heaven was unveiled to the rapt gaze of the banished disciple of Patmos, he beheld "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."—REV. VII. 9, 10. The grand reasons assigned for their contiguity with the throne, and their distinct beauty and splendour, are—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They once drank deeply of the brimming cup of terrestrial sorrow: they had waded through deep waters: and many afflictions had been laid upon their loins. But the draught of earthly gall made them to pant and thirst for the crystal stream gushing from beneath the throne, like the exhausted hart, for the cool and refreshing water-

brooks; and the legion trials of this lower estate prepared them for the high and rapturous joys of the celestial condition. The rest of the horny-handed sons of toil is more sweet and balmy after a hard day's work. The warm fireside of the cottage-home is more cheerful after the rude buffetings of the mountain storm. And the quiet haven is doubly welcome to the tempest-tossed mariner after the fierce encounter of the dashing gale. And, O, how unspeakably delightful to the afflicted and tried of God's family must heaven appear and feel, after the numberless and painful trials of earth! It is the goal of the weary race—the end of the spiritual war—the consummation of the Christian hope—the everlasting home of the ransomed spirit!

But afflictive bereavements must be associated with resignation and sanctification, to be of benefit to the soul in its present and future condition. Much depends upon the spirit the afflicted believer manifests during the oft-repeated season of trial. A murmuring and fretful disposition is rank rebellion against the necessary discipline of a kind and gracious *Father*, and, if cherished, must do infinite

damage to the weal of the soul." Even some of the most eminent Christians have failed to exhibit, in the dark hour of trial, those peculiar and rich excellencies which religion is noted for producing. Human weakness and depravity have for a while triumphed over, and trampled upon, the better principles of the regenerated heart, and tempests of unholy resentment have darkened and shook the soul. But few can bear to be weaned from their idols, and have the pleasant and sheltering gourd blasted above their heads. Even the godly Job, who was famed for his upright and holy conduct, when the surcharged clouds of sorrow gathered and burst upon his soul, cursed the day he was born, and, had he possessed the power, would have blotted it altogether from the records of time. And Jonah became angry and petulant with Jehovah when his favourite flower was smitten by an earth-worm. Had the wicked and repentant Nineveh perished, *that* would have been a matter he would not have regretted: but when the gourd, which sheltered his head from the burning rays of the sun, was withered, the passion of anger was at once aroused, and its

fires consumed the very soul within him. Ah ! we are mostly angry about trifles, whilst the loss of things of infinite importance scarcely causes us a momentary pang ! Alas ! for humanity, when God leaves it to itself ! A tranquil and resigned disposition best befits and adorns the character of the humble disciple of the Lord Jesus. And this divine grace can, and does, produce in those hearts which are, without reservation, given up to God.

We have read of a bereaved Christian mother into whose family the great spoiler entered, and carried away, one after another, the little lambs which lay in her warm bosom, and hid them in the cold, dark grave, whose resignation was so perfectly in keeping with her high profession that, though she possessed a heart as tender and sensitive as ever beat in the maternal bosom, she appeared as serene and happy as if they were all sleeping around her. Not a solitary tear coursed down her cheek—not a tremulous word fell from her lips, as she attempted to soothe her deeply-affected husband : her pale face wore no look of despair : and she dictated her wishes concerning their burial as though the shafts of death had not pierced or

touched her heart. The censorious world—which invariably judges and condemns by outward conduct, rather than by inward principle—called her an unfeeling woman, a heartless mother. But He who judges by the secret motives of the heart, rather than by the outward manifestations of the life, owned her as one of His precious jewels, for it was by His strength she was “made perfect in weakness.” She meekly acquiesced in the will of her Heavenly Father, confident that “the Judge of all the earth” could not but do right. This is that experience which every saint would fain possess, and happily exemplify, when afflictive providences visit his dwelling. We would assist such, by placing before them a few of those animating motives to submission to the Divine Mind, and resignation under severe trial, which will, when viewed and estimated aright, and when conjoined with the Holy Spirit’s blessing, lead to the sanctification and profit of every sad event in the believer’s earthly history.

Our Father-God is the primal source of all our afflictions and sorrows. The Inspired Volume says,—“Affliction cometh not forth of

the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground."—JOB v. 6. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"—AMOS III. 6. It is not sceptical philosophers alone who attribute the calamities of earth merely to "second causes:" in afflictive seasons, too many real Christians lose sight of Him without whose notice not even a sparrow can fall to the ground, and are apt to attribute their afflictions to the operation of general laws, to the will of man, and to unfortunate accidents. Now we do not, for a moment, question the operation of the laws of nature, nor the free agency of man; but we aver that it is of infinite importance to look beyond "second causes" to the "Great First Cause," or we shall be the subjects of dismay and terror. *Our* God is the governor and controller of the universe, and no event can transpire without His direction and permission. If there is light on this planet, it is because the sun is riding along the azure vault of heaven. If the ocean's surface is ploughed and riven, it is because the fierce wind sweeps over it. If the tear furrows the cheek, it is because the heart is sad. And if death,

or any other calamity, crosses the threshold of our homes, and invades and despoils the family circle, it is not by accident—not by chance—for no real accident can happen in the world as long as “the Lord reigneth”—nor is it without a cause; but it is because Heaven has given His permission, or direction, that such an occurrence shall take place. If poverty comes, God has sent it. If affliction comes, He has laid it on our loins. If bereavement comes, death is sent as His messenger to prepare the way before Him. If the loved one is torn from our side, God has done it. If a pet lamb is missing, God has removed it. If a “pleasant picture” is destroyed, to God we must attribute its destruction. “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.” It is no enemy—no frightful monster—no accident—no fatality—but a kind Father who hath done all this. “Oh,” says the gardener, as he passes down the walks, and is priding himself on the beds and borders which he has so carefully cultivated, “who removed that plant, who gathered that flower?” His fellow-servant says, “the master;” and he is dumb, and opens not his mouth, because *he* did it. “The

Lord killeth and maketh alive : He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich : He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory : for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them."—1 SAM II. 6-8.

Many who recognise this great truth, instead of drawing divine consolation from it, "charge God foolishly." They seek not to be comforted. They will go mourning all their days, till their grey hairs come down to the grave in sorrow. They cannot forgive God for wrenching off from the parent stock its branching honours, and eclipsing in the dark tomb so many bright and sunny hopes.

Others simply submit to the divine will : but submission is not resignation. Many submit not because they can from the heart say—"Not *my* will, but *Thine* be done," but because they must surrender to Omnipotence. Where there is only submission, the voice of God sounds harshly when He calls away a loved and darling child ; and His face is hid

in the clouds. The cup is doubly bitter. The night of sorrow is pitchy black. And the distressed soul feels herself abandoned, and sinks into deep despair, or stoical indifference. But when submission and resignation, like twin sisters, are linked together, the heavy load is lightened off the crushed spirit—the healing balm of divine consolation is applied to the wounded heart—the mysteries of Providence and grace are unfolded—earth seems holier and better, and heaven seems brighter and nearer. Submission is like a conquered foe, who only yields a mechanical acquiescence to the will of his conqueror, just because it is useless to strive against it: but resignation is like the halcyon riding fearlessly on the foaming billows, trusting to a Power above the storm, appearing as placid as though the dashing waters were as a sheet of glass, and, like the nightingale, pours out its sweetest and loudest notes when the storm rages the fiercest! When Job's calamities had reached their climax, he exclaimed—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "Are you willing to die?"—was a question once put to a young dying man. "*Yes, I suppose I must,*" he replied. There

was submission without resignation. "I thought I should sleep in Jesus, and awake in heaven," said a dying child to her mother, on awaking from a short slumber. "Is the sun up, and am I here? *But the Lord's will be done, not mine.*" This was resignation as well as submission. If our Heavenly Father appoints the rod, shall we not submit to divine chastisement? If He ordains our afflictions, shall we not be resigned to His sovereign decree? If our best Friend sees fit to remove from us "the delight of the eyes," or the Benjamin of the household, shall we not, from the depth of the heart, say—"Let Him do what seemeth good unto Him?" A deaf and dumb boy was once asked, by writing, why he was born deaf and dumb, whilst so many had the free use of all their natural faculties. And, in the same way, he replied in the beautiful and holy language of Jesus,—“Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”—MATT. XI. 26. What a noble reply! Would to God that every afflicted and bereaved parent felt and said the same! A God of Love cannot be unkind to the heirs of heaven: Infinite Wisdom cannot err in providential dispensations. The cup is bitter, but

it is full of tonic properties to nourish and strengthen the soul. The storm is fearful; but the Master treads upon its waves. The affliction is heavy; but he will make all our bed in our affliction, and lay beneath the fainting saint the everlasting arms. Who, or what, shall harm us if we are followers of that which is good? All things are ours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are ours; and we are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

“Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less;
The heirs of salvation,—
I know from his word,—
Through much tribulation,
Must follow their Lord.

Since all that I meet
Shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet,
The medicine is food.
Though painful at present,
‘Twill cease before long;
And then, O how pleasant
The conqueror's song!”

But there are others who cannot look above inferior agencies and second causes. Their

lives are filled up chiefly in lamenting the past. They mourn that they had not been more prudent and careful. Many bereaved parents are ever accusing themselves—sometimes not without just reasons—that they did not do for their departed children what their subsequent and sad experience has taught them was necessary to the preservation of their lives. Thus they intensify the affliction of a bereaving dispensation by vain self-reproaches. When God says to the stream of young life—“Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further; and here shall thy waves be stayed,” neither medical skill, nor parental solicitude can avail for a single moment. “Our lives are in His hand,” and death comes only at His bidding. It will be exceedingly difficult to cherish a spirit of resignation unless we thoroughly believe these two great facts. A clear apprehension of them will suffice to calm the soul, and impart to it a confidence which no storm can shake, and no calamity can destroy. We shall then see an angel’s hand and face where thousands only see that of the grisly foe. “We knew a family,” says the Rev. George Gilfillan, “where one of the elder branches once put on a black mask,

and entered suddenly amongst a company of children. Many of them shrieked and fled; but one fearless and holy child, who was soon after carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom, went calmly forward, put the mask aside, and revealed the smiling face of her elder brother. A striking parable of those who, strong in faith, and hope, and holiness, pierce through the ten-fold eclipse which rests upon the Sun of Love, and see it as it is, and as it is to be." But the clearest manifestations of the benign procedure of God is reserved as a discovery for eternity, when the whole divine contexture will be seen to be as kind as it was necessary, and as much for our everlasting weal as it was for the promotion of the divine glory. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."—JOHN XIII. 7.

How thankful should we feel to God that we have a revelation of His will—a disclosure of His secrets—an unclasped Bible—wherein we are taught those great fundamental truths concerning the divine procedure which forms a basis broad and strong enough for us to found on Him the most enlarged and boundless confidence; for without such a basis Christian

resignation could not exist. Mrs. Hannah More, in her excellent work on Practical Piety, writes very beautifully and nervously on this essential point:—"What a clue has revelation furnished to the intricate labyrinth which seems to involve the conduct which we impiously question! It unrolls the volume of Divine Providence, lays open the mysterious map of Infinite Wisdom, throws a bright light on the darkest dispensations, vindicates the inequality of appearances, and points to that blessed region where, to all who have truly loved and served God, every apparent wrong shall be proved to have been unimpeachably right, every affliction a mercy, and the severest trials the choicest blessings!"

But motives to Christian resignation may not only be drawn from the paternal character of God, from His supreme controul over every event which may transpire in the world, and from the gracious design which is invariably associated with all our afflictions, but also from other important considerations which, when regarded in their proper light, are fraught with comfort and blessedness to the heart of *the bereaved* Christian, and cannot but pro-

duce that holy disposition which it is the highest possible policy to possess, to cultivate, and to exemplify.

Our departed children are not lost. We sometimes speak of them as such; but this is only true in a limited and temporal sense, for that cannot truthfully be said to have gone and perished which we hope ultimately to regain and possess for ever: and many weep over their early death as though the grave had fixed a great gulf between them and their sleeping ones, over which they would never be allowed to pass. Gold is not lost when it is safely deposited in the strong iron coffer, and is not seen. Nor are the stars of heaven lost when the sun rises and eclipses their mellowed radiancy; they shine still, though we see them not, and cannot reap any advantage from their mild lustre. God lost not His "well-beloved Son," when he became incarnate to die for our salvation: when His great work was consummated, He returned back to heaven, laden with the spoils of victorious love. Nor are our little unseen children lost to us who are gone to heaven before us. Like the morning dew, which the orb of day has absorbed that we see

it no more, they have gone from us, and ascended up on high, drawn by a celestial attraction. We behold them no more with the eye of sense, for the tomb has hid them from the physical gaze; but with the eye of faith we can discern them in the many mansions of our Father's house above; to the internal eye they are always visible. It is true they cannot return to us, but can we not go to them? Heaven is the rendezvous of "the sacramental host,"—the peaceful haven where the sanctified will finally anchor—the everlasting home of the whole family of God! We shall meet them again. Our jewels have been taken to be polished and set in our diadem of glory. The tender and lovely flower is not destroyed, but housed safely from the impending storm. The missing pet lamb is not devoured by the voracious wolf, but penned securely within the celestial enclosure. "The child is not dead, but sleepeth." Ere long, the Master will wake it with a touch, and it shall slumber no more! "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."—ISAIAH XXVI. 19. ! Death has not broken up the

relationship, nor snapped asunder the strong cords of affection which bound us to them when they were personally present with us. Some of the links of the golden chain may lie unseen in the dark shadows of the grave, but the chain itself still remains complete. There is a mysterious union existing between the present and the future—the seen world and the hidden world—those gone before and those left behind. We may not be able to philosophize on the mystery itself, but the spirit cherishes it as an indisputable and a precious fact, and solaces herself with the strange reality. Christian faith says—a pious and holy family can never be minished. They may be parted asunder for a while; oceans may roll between them; and death may bear them hence to be no more seen on the earth; yet they are never lessened never minished. If earth has lost them, heaven has gained them, and, ultimately, heaven will gain all. Re-union *there* is as absolute a certitude as the mortal separation. What a delightful sentiment, on this consoling point, is couched in that sweet and touching ballad which emanated from the pen of the late poet Wordsworth, in which an affectionate little

sister is made to preach in her simple, and earnest, and loving way, the precious doctrine we have just set forth! Though it is well known, we cannot resist the desire to give the sentiment in full: it is so exquisitely natural, and artless, and beautiful. Such heart-consoling sentiments cannot be too well known, or become too popular.

"I met a little cottage girl,
She was eight years old, she said,
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

'Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?'
'How many? Seven in all,' she said,
And wondering, looked at me.

'And where are they, I pray you tell?'
She answered, 'Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea;—

Two of us in the churchyard lie,—
My sister and my brother;
And in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.'

'You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet you are seven; I pray you tell,
Sweet maid! how this may be?'

Then did the little maid reply,—
‘Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard-tree.’

‘You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs,—they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five.’

‘Their graves are green, they may be seen,’
The little maid replied;
‘Twelve steps, or more, from my mother’s door,
And they are side by side.

My stockings there I often knit,
My ‘kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
I sit and sing to them.

And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

The first that died was little Jane:
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God relieved her of her pain,
And then she went away.

So in the churchyard she was laid,
And all the summer dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.’

‘How many are you, then?’ said I,

‘If they two are in heaven?’

The little maiden did reply,—

‘Oh, master! we are seven!’

‘But they are dead, those two are dead,

Their spirits are in heaven?’

’Twas throwing words away; for still

The little maid would have her will,

And said,—‘*Nay, we are seven!*’”

Our little dead children are partially ours still. Though their enfranchised spirits have left their terrestrial parts, their dust sleeps within reach: a coat of green turf only—“but a step between”—divides their world from our world—the congregation of the dead from the congregation of the living. When death struck the fatal blow which levelled in the dust the fair flowers of our earthly Eden, he emancipated their imprisoned spirits, and sent them swiftly to heaven, but left his spoil in our hands, to baptize it with our tears, and entomb it with our kindred. If their little graves are monuments of their mortality, they are proofs also that they are not lost—that all association and fellowship is not at an end: they are visible connecting links which continue to bind the bereaved and the departed together—the family on earth with the “family in heaven.”

But this strongly-cherished consciousness of an unbroken and a perpetual fellowship, which recoils with instinctive dread at the bare thought of losing for ever the natural associations of earth, is not peculiar to the living only;—the sainted dead gave abundant proof that they possessed it when in the solemn act of dying. Amid the gloom and loneliness which gathered round their spirits in that awful hour, they plaintively expressed their last wish, in the touching language of the dying Jacob;—“I will lie with my fathers—bury me in their burying-place!” Two noted American writers—Mrs. Sigourney and Elihu Burritt—one a first-class poetess, and the other a self-made philosopher—have, very beautifully, expatiated on this interesting point. Mrs. Sigourney, in her attractive poetic way, tells us of a little dying girl who, after having “told her faith in Jesus,” was questioned by her mother where she would like to be buried—whether in “the ancient churchyard,” among “the white-marble monuments,” or in “the shady dell,” where “the early violets bloom?” But she coveted not a resting-place among the illustrious dead, nor in the quiet seclusion of the flowery vale:

“ One only wish she utter'd,
While life was ebbing fast,—
‘ Sleep by my side, dear mother,
And rise with me at last ! ’

Look ! look !—the thin lip quivers,
The blue eyes open wide,
And with a hollow whisper steals,—
‘ BURY ME BY YOUR SIDE. ’ ”

Elihu Burritt, in “ Sparks from the Anvil,” speaks pathetically of another little dying girl who, with life’s last accents, uttered a similar wish. — “ In the bright and dewy morning it had followed out behind its father into the field; and while he was there engaged in his labour, it had patted around among the meadow-flowers, and had stuck its bosom full, and all its burnished tresses, with carmine and lily-tinted things; and returning tired to its father’s side, he had lifted it upon the loaded cart; but a stone in the road had shaken it from its seat, and the ponderous iron-rimmed wheels had ground it down into the very cart-path, and the little crushed creature was dying. We had all gathered up closely to its bed-side, and were hanging over the young bruised thing, to see if it yet breathed, when a slight *movement* came over its lips, and its eyes partly

opened. There was no voice, but there was something beneath its eyelids which a mother alone could interpret. Its lips trembled again, and we all held our breath—its eyes opened a little farther, and then we heard the departing spirit whisper in that ear which touched those ashy lips :—‘ Mother! mother! don’t let them carry me away down to the dark, cold graveyard, but bury me in the garden—in the garden, mother!’ ” Thus, “ the ruling passion, strong in death,” grasps the cords of natural affection, and refuses to sustain a total separation. It is spell-bound to its earthly home.

But, above all, Inspiration sanctions the consoling idea of a union and fellowship with our departed children which neither time, nor space, nor death, can sever and annihilate. Nay, more, it lifts us a step infinitely higher, and assures us that Christianity associates the converted ones on earth with the glorified hosts in heaven, and now invests the sanctified with a dignity and glory which earth’s mightiest ones cannot reach. St. Paul brings forth this great truth, in its spiritual acceptance, with a vividness and power which cannot fail to solace the bereaved heart, and greatly stimulate the

struggling Christian :—" But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."—**HEB. XII. 22-24.**

If, therefore, we must weep over tiny forms and green graves, let our tears be the tears of evangelic hope, and not those of heathenish despair. And as death has not, and cannot, altogether separate the redeemed child and the converted parent, let us learn to cultivate the passive grace of resignation to the supreme will and gracious design of our Father-God, knowing in whom we have believed, and feeling confident that all things will work together for our good. The sweet voices of our little ones are not for ever hushed by the grim tyrant. Those incarnate angels who played for a while on our hearth-stone, and smiled their glad joy into our hearts, and then stretched forth their

golden pinions, and soared to heaven, are ours still. "They are not lost—but gone before."

And, then, another motive to Christian resignation may be drawn from the blessed fact that, if the Benjamin of the family is gone, other dear children remain behind to smooth the rough pathway of life, and shed a halo of blissfulness around the decline of old age.

"All are not taken ! there are left behind
Living beloveds, tender looks to bring,
And make the day-light still a blessed thing,
And tender voices to make soft the wind."

All the household lights are not put out. All the bright stars are not quenched. All the sunny rays of earthly comfort are not withdrawn. All the sweet voices are not hushed. All the natural branches are not wrenched off the parent stock. And Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever !" Sad, therefore, as our bereavements are, they might have been far more numerous and harrowing ; and many and big the tears of grief which have ploughed our pale cheeks, yet, after all, we have felt the softening and soothing power of divine grace, and rich mercies have been

lavishly bestowed in the dark night of sorrow, which call for our most devout thanksgiving. If Jehovah has taken away some of our choicest blessings, it was only that He might replace them with others infinitely more valuable.

Lastly, there is one other motive to Christian resignation which the bereaved heart is, perhaps, generally more willing to recognise and act upon than all others beside—it is drawn from the blessed hope of re-union and recognition in heaven. When the faith of the bereaved parent rises to vigorous exercise, and with her holy hand lifts the curtain, and unveils, with glorious distinctness, the sublime realities of the eternal state, so animated and transported does he sometimes become, that he loses his tears of sorrow amid smiles of seraphic joy, and he forgets his sinful murmurings in the rapt exclamations of celestial hope! Sorrowing spirits long for re-union with those little ones who have pioneered the way to glory, and will never rest till their longings are satisfied and consummated in the glorious and eternal reality. “That paternal affection”—said Dr. Doddridge, after burying a beloved child—“which would have been a cord to tie me to

earth, and have added new pangs to my removal from it, will be as a golden chain to draw me upwards, and add one other charm and joy even to Paradise itself." Without us they are "not made perfect," nor can we be permanently happy away from them. As they will not return to us to be tossed on the waves of trouble, to pace this waste-howling desert, and to be again imprisoned in the mortal house, we are going to them in their celestial Paradise; and hope soon to anchor in the same harbour of peace. They crowd the pearl-flashing gates, and beneath their broad and dazzling portals they stand, and stretch forth their little arms and, with seraphs' voices, call us home. They beckon us away to the spirit-land. They reiterate the emphatic and pressing invitation of Sovereign Love—"Come! for all things are now ready!" They wait to receive us into the "everlasting habitations" of their everlasting home. No thoughts, however lofty—no imagery, however sublime—no language, however forceful, can even faintly set forth the transporting delight of that glorious hour which is destined to witness the meeting of Christian parents and redeemed children in heaven, and

the re-organization of the associations and fellowships begun on earth! O, the first moment spent *there*, will infinitely more than compensate for all the bereavements, and tears, and sorrows of earth! Then shall we know what we were most unwilling to learn below, that these light and momentary afflictions have worked out for us an "eternal weight of glory." In a letter of sympathetic condolence with a bereaved parent, the celebrated Robert Hall expressed his firm conviction, that "their Heavenly Father must have destined them to some distinguished station in the eternal edifice, with whom He has taken such pains in hewing, cutting, and polishing." The brightest crown will glisten on that forehead which has ached most with sanctified sorrow. They will stand nearest the throne which have "come out of great tribulation."

Ere long, suffering Christian, the pitchy darkness of the night of sorrow will melt into the morning twilight of the eternal day: its golden blush will soon foreshadow its near approach. "The night is far spent; the day is at hand." *Then*, all the mysteries of our *temporal* condition will be explained. The

“smiling face,” which hid itself “behind a frowning Providence,” will be unclouded : the bitter-tasted bud will burst into the sweet-scented flower, and Jehovah will be His own interpreter !

“My stricken heart to Jesus yields
Love's deep devotion now,
Adores and blesses—while it bleeds—
His hand that strikes the blow.

Then fare thee well—a little while—
Life's troubled dream is past ;
And I shall meet with thee, my child,
In life—in bliss, at last !”

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